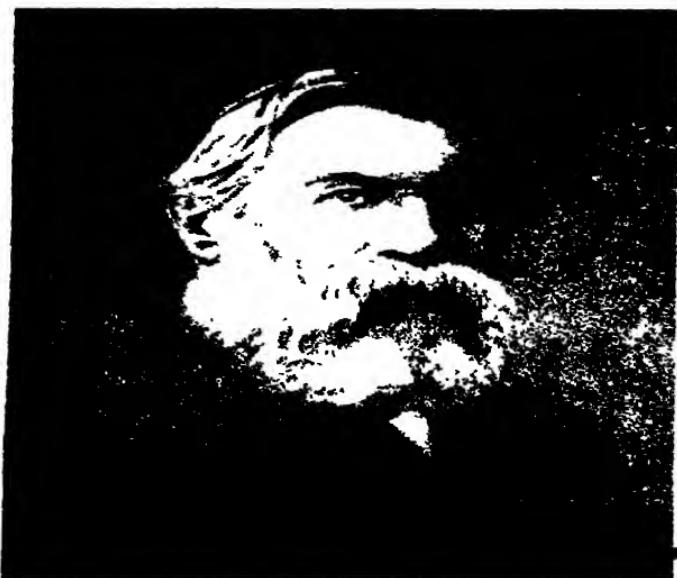


First THE
And Second
International


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Frederick Engels



THE FIRST AND SECOND INTERNATIONALS

THE FIRST INTERNATIONAL :

The International Workingmen's Association—the famous First International—was founded in London on 28th of September 1864. After the massacre of the French Workers in 1848 and the collapse of the Chartist movement in England in the forties, the international working class movement had entered a period of ebb. Since these defeats the workers had concentrated mainly on the economic struggle for reforms. But after 1857 there re-opened a period of political activity on the part of the European working class. The political reawakening of the workers soon revived the idea of internationalism and led to the formation of the First International.

Marx was the soul of this organisation, and drafted its inaugural appeal, which stated that the emancipation of the working class must be the task of the workers themselves ; that their emancipation could be achieved only by the abolition of class rule altogether ; that the economic subjugation of the workers to the capitalist owners of the means of production was the cause of servitude in all its forms ; and that the cause of emancipation of the proletariat was an international one demanding the international solidarity of the working class. Under Marx's leadership the International proceeded to unite the labour movements of the various countries as well as to fight against various unscientific Socialist theories and trends.

As a result of the economic crisis of 1856 a wave of strikes swept over the advanced capitalist countries. In supporting and guiding these strikers and in mobilizing the international solidarity of the proletariat in their favour the International proved itself to be a very valuable weapon in the hands of the workers. Despite the opposition of the bourgeoisie and police prosecution the International grew in strength and became the recognized international organization of the working class.

In 1871 occurred the historic Paris Commune, in which the Paris workers seized the power. In the famous address issued by the International Workingmen's Assoc-

ation in September 1870, Marx had warned the French proletariat against an untimely uprising. But when in 1871 the armed uprising actually took place the International Workingmen's Association supported it, and its Parisian members were among the most capable and gallant fighters on behalf of the Commune.

But following on the defeat of the Paris Commune, the European proletariat entered on a period of reaction and retreat. The support of the International in England, France and Germany as well as in the smaller countries of Europe swiftly declined. United repression by the several governments of Europe and the split caused by the anarchist Bakuninists hastened the decline. In 1872 Marx carried through the transfer of the headquarters of the General Council of the International to New York. The International was formally dissolved in 1876.

However, the first International had played its historic role in guiding the International Workers' movement for a decade and permeating the workers' movement with the ideas of revolutionary socialism. There now followed a period of formation and growth of mass Socialist labour parties in separate countries on a scale hitherto unknown. In 1878 Marx wrote in an English publication attacking the contention that the International had been a failure. "In reality the Social-Democratic Workers' parties in Germany,

Switzerland, Denmark, Portugal, Italy, Belgium, Holland and North America, organized more or less within national frontiers, represent just as many international groups, no longer isolated sections sparsely distributed over various countries and held together by a General Council on the periphery, but rather the working class itself in constant, active and direct connection. Thus, far from dying out the International has developed from one stage into another and higher one, in which many of its original tendencies have already been fulfilled". (See Mehring—Karl Marx, page 483). The period of the First International, we should note, was one in which the European mass parties had not yet arisen. The backbone of the First International had been the English trade unions which at that time took an interest in working class politics. Although it included several small parties and groups in Europe and America the only genuine mass labour party it contained had been the party in Germany.

THE SECOND INTERNATIONAL :

During the eighties, Marxist parties arose in most of the European countries, and in 1889 combined in the Second International. During this era the Socialist parties succeeded in winning the allegiance of a majority of the industrial workers in Germany, France, Italy, Austria-Hungary, Switzerland, Holland, Belgium, Scandinavia

and Russia. In England however, where the trade unions were now confining their activities purely to the economic field, a Socialist mass party failed to develop. In America too, the Socialist Party formed in 1901 did not gain a mass backing.

The largest and best organized of the parties of the Second International was the Social-Democratic Party of Germany which by 1914 had secured nearly one third of the total number of seats in the Reichstag. The Social Democratic Workers' Party of Russia too, held an important position in the International on account of the revolutionary character of the movement in that country and the theoretical ability of its leaders, particularly Plekhanov. The outstanding Marxist theoreticians of the Second International were Plekhanov and Karl Kautsky, while the political leader was Bebel.

International Congresses were held in Amsterdam in 1904, Stuttgart in 1907, Copenhagen in 1910 and Basle in 1912. At the last named conference a resolution against the approaching war was passed, incorporating and developing the decisions of the previous congresses on this subject. In the event of the outbreak of war the decision was "to intervene in favour of its speedy termination and to utilise the economic and political crises created by the war to arouse the people and thereby to hasten the downfall of capitalist class rule".

This Manifesto of the Basle Congress of November 1912 was signed by all the Socialist parties of the world.

And yet, despite this resolution, on the outbreak of the first Imperialist World War in August 1914, a majority of the parties of the Second International openly supported the war, voting war credits and in certain cases even taking office in the government. Only the Socialist parties of Russia and Serbia opposed the war. (Later, when Italy entered the war, the Italian Socialist party also opposed the war, but taking a pacifist attitude). The 'social-patriotism' of the parties of the Second International seems all the more surprising when one considers the fact that the leaders of all these parties considered themselves to be Marxists, or at least freely used the name and ideology of Marx.

But it would be a mistake to imagine that the capitulation of the leaders of the Second International to the bourgeoisie of their respective countries in 1914 was a sudden lapse for which the basis had not been laid well in advance. Viewed historically, the betrayal of 1914 appears not as a sudden deviation from the policies that had increasingly been gaining acceptance among the leaders of the Second International parties in the preceding years, but as the logical culmination of them. The growth of opportunism in the parties of the Second International had for several years prior to 1914 been an

open secret in European Social-Democratic circles. Lenin defined the ingredients of opportunism as being the replacement of revolutionary by reformist aims ; the rejection of the class struggle and the adoption of class collaboration ; the neglect of illegal organisation and activities in times of crisis ; and in war time, the denial of the internationalism of the working class combined with the preaching of bourgeois patriotism. There were, to be sure, in most of the parties left wing elements untainted by the opportunist politics of the leaders. But the only groups of any magnitude were the Bolsheviks in Russia and the Rosa Luxembourg group in Germany. The opportunist leadership of the majority of the Second International parties, following a policy of limiting their activities to trade unionism and parliamentarism in peace time, found no difficulty in accomodating themselves to the "defence of the fatherland" slogan in time of war.

By attributing the betrayal of 1914 to the growth of opportunism in the parties of the Second International, however, we by no means exhaust the problem. Opportunism is a political trend and no political trend grows in a vacuum. It remains to trace the roots, that is, to uncover the social basis of the opportunism of the Second International.

The beginning of the 19th century of the European

working class movement had been stormy. The Chartist movement in England in the forties, the struggle of the French workers in 1848 and still more their heroism in the Commune of 1871, the militant struggles of the German workers in 1848 and even after 1878 against the anti-Labour Laws of Bismarck were characteristic of the universally militant nature and revolutionary temper of the early European working class movement. The course of capitalist development in these years did not permit the rise of reformist illusions in the working class movement. That is how it came to pass that both Marx and Engels, quite correctly on the basis of the objective conditions of the time, though proved incorrect by the subsequent course of historical development, visualised the proletarian revolution not as a distant event to be measured even in decades, but as an imminent practical problem of their time.

But with its entry into the stage of Monopoly and Imperialism in the last quarter of the 19th Century, Capitalism obtained a new lease of life. Capitalism, already decrepit and torn asunder by its internal contradictions was able to enter on another period of expansion of trade and industry through the ruthless exploitation of colonies under imperialism. In all the great European countries, and particularly in Britain, the growth of imperialism and the accumulation of super-profits enabled the bourgeoisie of these countries to grant

concessions and win over a small and privileged upper stratum of workers as well as to gain the support of sections of the petty bourgeoisie benefiting from imperialism. (These sections had no interest in revolution, but only in defending their right to a share of the spoils of imperialist exploitation). This was the social basis of the opportunism of the Second International. Resting for their main support on these layers, the opportunist leaders were able, through the trade union bureaucracy, to permeate the working class movement with reformist and class-collaborationist ideas in peace time and to lead the workers into the camp of the bourgeois patriots on the outbreak of the imperialist war,

Chapter Two

THE THIRD INTERNATIONAL:

With the outbreak of the war in 1914 the Second International collapsed. It collapsed not merely in the formal sense that no contact was possible between the different parties in the belligerent countries. But by collaboration with the national bourgeoisie it ceased to stand for the international solidarity of the working class, and ceased to be an instrument of emancipation of the working class. Lenin was quick to realise this, and within a month of the outbreak of war he wrote on the necessity of building a new international.

In 1915 Lenin at the head of the Bolshevik delegation attended a conference of anti-war Socialists at Zimmerwald. Here Lenin put forward the uncompromising line that a correct proletarian policy for obtaining peace, was to convert the imperialist war into Civil War by revolution. This policy was too extreme for the majority of delegates. It was the same at another anti-war conference held at Kienthal the following year. But Lenin was building around him a group of uncompromising revolutionary internationalists who were to form the foundation of the new revolutionary international.

THE FOUNDING OF THE COMMUNIST INTERNATIONAL :

The victorious proletarian revolution took place in Russia in November 1917. In March 1918 the Soviet Government was forced to conclude peace with Germany at the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk on very unfavourable terms. After the defeat of Germany by the Allies came the period of interventionist war against the U. S. S. R. The young workers' state was attacked on all sides by counter-revolutionary armies financed and armed by the Allies. In late 1918 and early 1919 the Soviet armies suffered defeat after defeat. It was in the midst of this crisis that Lenin called for the formation of the new International.

The Third International was formed at a Conference held in Moscow, in March 1919. It was not a large conference. It was very difficult to reach Russia at that time, and very few were able to get through. The only delegates who arrived from abroad were from Germany, America, Austria, Norway, Sweden and a few other small countries. The other foreign parties were represented by persons already in Russia. Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht, the leaders of the Spartacists in Germany, who represented the revolutionary workers who had broken from the Second International, had been murdered by the soldiers of the German

Social-Democratic Noske, or they would have been present.

The first Congress took a very definite stand against the re-actionary effort to rebuild the Second International in its pre-war form, and stood for the organisation of the international proletarian vanguard in a homogenous revolutionary International. The main features of the Congress pitilessly exposed the treacherous pacifism of the American President Wilson and the illusion of a capitalist League of Nations which was supported by the Second International. At this congress Lenin's theses on "Democracy and Dictatorship" were adopted, which showed on the basis of the experience of the Russian revolution the necessity for the destruction of the bourgeois state apparatus and the establishment of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat on the basis of Soviets.

Immediately following the war there occured a powerful growth of the mass movement in practically all countries of the world. The masses began to see through the treacherous role played by the reformist leaders. Under pressure of the masses some of those reformist leaders (of the German Independent Socialist Party, the Italian Socialist Party, the French Socialist Party, the British I. L. P. etc.) sought affiliation to the Communist International without changing their reformist and pacifist ideas. This danger of the introduction of opportunist

tendencies into the ranks of the Comintern was counter-acted at the Second Congress (1920) which adopted the 21 points conditioning membership of the Comintern. A complete break with all pacifist ideas and illusions (such as disarmament, League of Nations, International arbitration etc.) was demanded ; and in place of a loose organisation of nationally independent parties (as in the Second International), it was decided to build the Comintern as a world party on the foundation of a common theory and practice, and with the aim of realising a common international leadership on the basis of the principles of democratic centralism.

Those politicians who had been hindered by the decisions of the Second Congress from joining the Comintern thereupon organized a $2\frac{1}{2}$ International, standing midway between the second and third Internationals. But there was no basis for such an organisation. The $2\frac{1}{2}$ International was crushed in the struggle between the second and third Internationals. Its revolutionary elements turned to the third International. Its bureaucratic tops re-united in 1923 with the second International.

THE THIRD & FOURTH CONGRESSES :

In the German revolution of 1918, the Hungarian revolution of 1919, in the movement of the Italian workers in 1920, the absence of a revolutionary party

with a farsighted and bold leadership proved fatal to success.

"The post-war revolutionary movement of the masses was strong enough to overthrow the bourgeoisie. But there was no one to bring this to a consummation. The social-democracy, which held the leadership of the traditional organizations of the working class, exerted all its efforts to save the bourgeois regime. When we looked forward at that time to an immediate seizure of power by the proletariat, we reckoned that a revolutionary party would mature rapidly in the fire of a civil war. But the two terms did not coincide. The revolutionary wave of the post-war period ebbed before the communist parties grew up and reached maturity in the struggle with the social-democracy so as to assume the leadership of the insurrection". (Trotsky—Third International After Lenin, Page 87).

The vital importance, in the post-war period, of correct leadership for success is well illustrated in the following passage by Trotsky. "In a period of growing capitalism even the best party leadership could do no more than only accelerate the formation of a workers' party. Inversely, mistakes of the leadership could retard this process. The objective pre-requisites of a proletarian revolution matured but slowly, and the work of the party retained a preparatory character.

"Today, on the contrary, every new sharp change in the political situation to the left places the decision in the hands of the revolutionary party. Should it miss the critical situation, the latter veers round to its opposite. Under these circumstances the role of the party leadership acquires exceptional importance. The words of Lenin to the effect that two or three days can decide the fate of the international revolution would have been almost incomprehensible in the epoch of the Second International. In our Epoch on the contrary, these words have only too often been confirmed and, with the exception of October, always from the negative side". (*ibid* : page 83).

In these circumstances, the responsibility of the Comintern was tremendous. Correct leadership by the Comintern was essential if the Communist Parties of the various countries were to lead the workers to victory. Till 1923 the Third International performed this task creditably.

In March 1921, despite the fact that the revolutionary wave was ebbing in Germany the young German Communist Party decided to overthrow the bourgeois regime at one blow. The guiding thought of the German Central Committee was to save the Soviet Republic. Needless to say, the effort ended in defeat. The determination of the leadership and the dissatisfaction of the masses does not suffice for victory. The masses must have confidence

in the leadership of the party to follow it. Other Communist parties too had been showing signs of "ultra-leftism". In fact in 1921 Lenin had written his "Left Wing Communism, An Infantile Disorder" as a corrective to these tendencies.

The third Congress of the Comintern held in 1921 made every effort to counteract the infantile disorder of ultra-leftism of its sections. It pointed out that the existing Communist Parties, politically as well as organisationally, were not ripe enough for the conquest of power. It advanced the slogan "To the masses", that is, To the conquest of Power, through a previous congress of the masses. Lenin had to struggle hard against the ultra-leftists who were led by Bukharin, in order to get his policy accepted. The decisions of the third Congress and of the fourth Congress which confirmed and amplified these decisions in 1922, are invaluable to this day. They laid down the policy of united front with the Social Democratic parties on the basis of transitional demands, preserving the independence of the proletarian party, by which the working class could be taken forward to the conquest of power.

But the German events of 1923 showed that the Leninist policy had not been grasped, not only by the Communist Party of Germany but also by the leaders of the Comintern itself.

Chapter Three

THE DECLINE OF THE COMINTERN

THE GERMAN DEFEAT OF OCTOBER 1923:

The German events of 1923 form the breaking point that inaugurates a new post-Leninist period of the Comintern. Lenin had fallen ill in the middle of 1922, and except for a brief period at the end of 1922 was no longer in active work and available to give his invaluable guidance in matters both internal and international. Stalin, Zinoviev and Kamenev were at the head of affairs. When the German events matured in 1923 Trotsky was already out of the secret council of this "triumvirate" as it was popularly known.

After the occupation of the Ruhr region by French troops early in 1923 a revolutionary ferment swiftly grew in Germany. By summer, the German bourgeoisie was in a hopeless position and a revolutionary situation existed. But neither the German Communist Party nor the leadership of the Comintern realised this. Stalin wrote as follows to Zinoviev and Bukharin in August 1923 about the situation in Germany:

"Should the Communists (at the present stage) strive to seize power without the social democracy—are they ripe for this already—this in my opinion is the question If now in Germany, the power, so to say, will fall and the Communists will seize it, they will fall through with a crash. Certainly the Fascists are not napping, but it is more advantageous to us for the Fascists to attack first: this will rally the whole working class around the Communists. (Germany is not Bulgaria). Besides, the Fascists in Germany, according to the data we have, are weak. In my estimation the Germans must be restrained, and not spurred on." These were in fact the views not only of Stalin but of his whole faction. The favourable opportunity passed. It was only at the end of September that the leadership of the Comintern became belatedly aware of what had happened. Even then the instructions to the German Communists was to enter the Social-Democratic Government in Saxony. The revolutionary situation "veered round to its opposite" and the offensive was taken by the Reaction. 9,000 workers were put on trial. Wage-cuts and increased hours followed, and the German events of 1923 ended in a bigger defeat than in 1921.

The 5th Congress met in June 1924 eight months after the defeat of the German proletariat. Its duty was to analyse the causes of the defeat and draw the necessary conclusions from it. Zinoviev and Bukharin threw the

blame entirely on the shoulders of the Communist Party of Germany and absolved the leadership of the Comintern from blame. The Russian Opposition led by Trotsky which stated that the defeat was serious and that the German proletariat would take time to recover, was accused of a lack of faith in the proximity of the German and European revolutions. Trotsky himself was called a liquidator.* But the influence of the Communist Party of Germany declined in the following years, while the Social-Democrats who had been losing their influence in 1923, grew. It was not till after four years (till 1928) that the German proletariat began to advance again. The correctness of the criticism of the Russian Opposition was proved to the hilt.

But the leadership of the Comintern refused to realise that the post-war revolutionary wave on the continent of Europe was receding. Throughout 1924, they kept repeating that Germany and Europe were on the verge of revolution. It is not surprising therefore, that the years 1924-25 were years of Left mistakes and putschist experiments. The Bulgarian putschist experiment of September 1923 and the Estonian armed uprising of December 1924, both of which resulted in crushing defeats, were the direct result of the wrong policy of the leadership of the Comintern.

* A treatment of the Left Opposition will be found in Chapter Five.

It was in these years that Stalin first invented his theory of Social Fascism. When it is able to do so, we know, the bourgeoisie rules through the form of government known as bourgeois democracy, utilising the social-democracy to deceive the masses. It is when the bourgeoisie is faced with an imminent revolutionary danger that it resorts to fascism. Social-democracy and Fascism are of course, two poles of the bourgeois front, but two poles nevertheless, and it is necessary to distinguish between them. But Stalin lumped these two together and laid down that "Social-Democracy is objectively a moderate wing of Fascism." This incorrect over-simplification, as we shall see, led to the victory of German Fascism in 1933.

BUREAUCRATIC DISMISSEALS OF LEADERS :

Very soon, the most important communist parties, following the decisions of the 5th Congress (of 1924) began to lose their influence. This was the result of the ultra-left policies followed. The leaders of these parties were now suddenly branded "ultra-leftists" removed violently by the Comintern, and other leaders put in their place. This practice of bureaucratic dismissal of leaders by the Comintern heads for having reaped the disastrous results of the wrong policies imposed by the Comintern leadership itself, hastened the degeneration of the Comintern. As early as 1921 Lenin had warned

Zinoviev and Bukharin by letter pointing out that if they demanded nothing but approbation in the International they would surround themselves exclusively with "Obedient fools".

Not long before the dismissal of leaders for ultra-leftism, there had taken place (in the ultra-left period of 1924-5) a series of dismissals of leaders, who, together with the Opposition, had maintained that the post-war revolutionary wave was now at an ebb. In 1924, in France, the leadership of Souverine and Rosmer had been accused of sympathies with the Opposition and been replaced by the "Left" leadership of Treint and Girault. In Germany Brandler and Thalheimer had been replaced by Fischer and Maslow. In Poland Versky had been replaced by the "Left" Domsky. But none of these new leaders as we have seen, lasted long either. By 1926 Treint and Girault were expelled from the party and replaced by Doriot, Barbe and Thorez. Fischer and Maslow were expelled and replaced by Thaelmann and Neumann. The Domsky group was expelled and replaced by a new leadership. If in more recent times, such expulsions have not been so common, that is only because the leaders of the Communist Parties have degenerated into paid agents of the Comintern who merely carry out instructions and are ready to change policy to meet the demands of the latest communique from Moscow. Today they take all the blame for the mistakes of the Comin-

tern leadership, and there is no necessity to expel them.

These changes of leadership in 1925 coincided with an abrupt change in the policy of the Comintern in 1925-6 from the previous disastrous one of ultra-leftism to the even more disastrous one of rightism. The policies of the Comintern in future, we shall notice, consist of a series of zig-zags. Driven from one extreme to another by the disastrous results of their policies both in the U S S R and outside, the bureaucracy will transform the Third International from a powerful weapon for international revolution into an abject instrument of the foreign policy of the Soviet bureaucrats. The revolutionary International of Lenin will be transformed into a reactionary organization betraying the cause of World Revolution. Not only in policy but in personnel the International of Stalin will bear no resemblance to that founded by Lenin in 1919. The leaders of the October revolution, the militant rank and file Bolsheviks who refused to leave the revolutionary path will be persecuted, imprisoned and physically exterminated. The only resemblance between the Internationals of Lenin and Stalin will be in the name.

THE ANGLO-RUSSIAN COMMITTEE :

The abrupt change to a rightist policy in 1925 led to even more serious disasters to the international movement than occurred in the ultraleftist period of 1923-5.

The chief defeats were in Britain and China.

Late in 1924 a British trade union delegation led by Purcell the president of the T U C visited Russia, inspected the achievements of the Soviet Government and returning to England issued a glowing report. As a result of this visit, in May 1925 there was formed the Anglo-Russian Committee composed of representatives of the British and Russian trade union movements. The purpose of the Committee was stated to be to promote international trade union unity, to struggle against capitalist reaction and against the danger of new wars. The General Council of the T U C of Britain, composed of reformist labour leaders desired this committee, because, with the growing militancy of the British Workers at this time, association with Russia protected their popularity. But the Anglo-Russian Committee was useful also to the revolutionary movement. It focussed the attention of the advanced workers on Russia ; it helped to unite and mobilize large sections of the workers for the first step in a struggle against capitalist reaction. However, the reformist leaders being reformists would, side with their own bourgeoisie in a critical situation. It was necessary for the revolutionaries to realise this and to prepare to expose them mercilessly when they did so. But this was precisely what the Comintern leadership (at that time, of Stalin and Bukharin) failed to realise and accomplish.

The Opposition did not oppose the formation of the Anglo-Russian Committee, but they recognized it for what it was, and pointed out the danger of expecting the reformist leaders to take part in any genuine struggle. Their arguments were not dealt with, but they were accused by the ruling clique of opposing the united front and of being in the pay of Sir Austen Chamberlain !

At this time Trotsky wrote a book called "Where is Britain Going?" (February 1926) in which he mercilessly attacked the reformist trade union leaders of Britain. "The Communist Party" he wrote, "can prepare for the role of leadership only by a relentless criticism of all the directing personnel of the British Labour Movement, only by a day in day out denunciation of its conservative, anti-proletarian, imperialistic, monarchistic, lackey-like role in all spheres of social life and of the class movement". The book was in effect a reply to the illusions that Stalin and his Rightist bureaucrats were sowing in the minds of British and Russian workers alike.

A strike of the British coal miners occurred in early 1926 and led to the General Strike commencing at the beginning of May of that year. A general strike is not an accident but a political phenomenon arising from the profound crisis of the capitalist system. It is a class war in its most acute pre-revolutionary stage. The next step

leads to the openly revolutionary stage. But in order to develop the struggle to its higher stage there is required a working class party pursuing a correct policy.

The British Communist Party in 1926 was small. But size is not everything. It worked hard before the struggle, but the wrong policy of the International prevented it from preparing the working class in advance for the treachery of the reformist trade union leaders. Worse still, for a long time after these leaders had betrayed the workers the Communist Party was prevented by the actions of the International from exposing them. After nine days of the General Strike, the reformist leaders, succumbing to the pressure of their own bourgeoisie, called it off. Immediately the opposition demanded a break-away from the Anglo Russian Committee and an exposure of the British leaders. Stalin and Bukharin however violently opposed this, and persisted in sticking to this now useless allies for more than a year longer.

Towards the end of 1926, the Chinese revolution was advancing with tremendous force towards its high watermark. The British reformist trade union leaders, apart from pious protests in theory, in practice supported British Imperialism in its repression of the movement in China. Yet Stalin continued to maintain this farcical united front. Towards the middle of 1927 the

Chamberlain Government raided the Soviet Trade Buildings in London and broke off relations with Russia. The British Trade Unionists who had now no longer any use of the Anglo Russian Committee, openly withdrew from it of their own accord.

The episode of the Anglo-Russian Committee provides us with a classic example of how the united front should not be made. A critical period in British politics had been wasted. Thanks to the policy of the Comintern, the weak Communist Party of Great Britain, during a period when it could have enormously strengthened itself, was further confused and weakened.

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In its Rightist period of 1925-27 the Comintern supported the building of "Workers' and Peasants' Parties" instead of "Communist parties" in most of the colonial and Asiatic countries (India, Dutch East Indies, Indonesia, Japan, Korea &c.). This was contrary to the whole theory and practice of Marxism which points to the imperative necessity of forming an independent party of the proletariat. The un-Marxist policy of the Comintern disorganized and demoralised the proletarian vanguard in these countries and is one of the important causes for the weakness of proletarian parties in these countries today.

Chapter Four

THE TRAGEDY OF THE CHINESE REVOLUTION:

After the war, commencing May 1st 1919, there opened a period of militant workers' struggles and growth of the working class movement in China. In the spring of 1923 Lenin wrote his last article, declaring that the revolution in the east was approaching. From then on, seized by his fatal disease, Lenin never worked again. Towards the end of 1923, Stalin, Zinoviev and Kamenev who were at the head of affairs decided, in spite of all the teachings of Lenin which pointed to the necessity of organising the working class independently of and against the bourgeoisie, and notwithstanding the experience of the Russian Revolution itself, that the young Communist Party of China should join the bourgeois nationalist Kuomintang. Trotsky opposed this measure, but to no avail.

In the middle of 1925 there occurred the General Strike in Shanghai as a protest against the shooting of workers and students by the British Imperialist police. The Chinese bourgeoisie supported the strike at the start but withdrew their support after a month. This strike

showed clearly that the working class of China was the class that was destined to lead the assault against imperialism. The strike was settled in Shanghai but was the signal for over a hundred strikes of sympathy all over China. The mightiest of these was the famous Hongkong-Canton strike.

Both in Canton and British owned Hong Kong a boycott of British goods and a general strike was declared. The strike was complete. The workers set up their strike committee which functioned as the executive committee of an embryo soviet. It organised the strike, built up an armed guard of pickets and set up a strikers' court which tried offenders. After a year the strike continued as strong as ever with the British capitalists losing half a million pounds a day ! The Communist Party of China played a leading part. There was a rapid growth of trade unions all over China. The Communist Party membership, 800 in 1925, by January 1926 had risen to 30,000. To add to all this, the peasants, suffering under the feudal-militarist landlords and harassed by money-lenders, began to unite in a vast agrarian movement. The Chinese revolution had arrived. With a correct leadership there were tremendous possibilities before it.

THE PERMANENT REVOLUTION :
Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution, the correctness of which was borne out by the whole experience of the

Russian revolution, is the sole means by which we can comprehend the revolutionary process in backward countries like China, India and Spain. It is the only sure guide to the success of the revolution in colonial and semi-colonial countries.

Trotsky points out that in the present imperialist epoch in which capitalism has become a world wide system, we have the phenomenon in backward countries of feudal and pre-capitalist forms existing side by side with the most modern capitalist forms. This is what he calls the law of combined development. The wooden plough and the bullock cart of the village co-exist with the power-driven machine and modern means of locomotion of the town. Together with semi-feudal relations in the land the most modern capitalist relations are reproduced in industry. This co-existence of the old with the new of pre-capitalist with modern capitalist relations has the most profound implications for the course of development of such backward countries.

The bourgeois-democratic revolution clearing the way for capitalist development which occurred in the advanced capitalist countries in previous centuries (in England in the 17th and in France in the 18th centuries) had not yet taken place in these backward countries. The tasks of this belated bourgeois revolution, particularly the abolition of a semi-feudal land system, have

still not been completed. These backward countries therefore face a bourgeois-democratic revolution, the basis of which is the land question. Now, in what manner will this revolution occur? In previous centuries, the rising bourgeoisie provided leadership to the peasants who rose against the feudal landlords, and the revolution was accomplished in this manner. But the bourgeoisie of backward countries, which has come into existence only after the progressive role of the bourgeoisie in the world as a whole had been exhausted, can no longer perform this revolutionary role.

In the first place, having come late on the scene, they do not have the independence and strength of the early bourgeoisie of former times. They are from their birth connected with and dependent on international finance capital, that is, the big bourgeoisie of the leading imperialist countries. This is particularly evident in the bourgeoisie of colonial and semi-colonial countries. Here, although the local bourgeoisie may on occasion be prepared to play an oppositional role to the imperialists they do so not for the purpose of embarking on a revolutionary struggle to secure their independence, but only for striking a bargain with the imperialists. Even where they embark on a genuine struggle against one section of imperialist, they generally do so with the help, overt or secret, of another imperialist group and are in no case prepared to struggle for freedom from all

imperialism.

Secondly, unlike the once revolutionary bourgeoisie of the advanced countries referred to earlier, which arose in opposition to the feudal landowning classes and in struggle against it, the bourgeoisie of backward countries has developed largely from the landowning class itself, and in any case is closely connected with the landlords, particularly through loans and mortgages. It is not surprising, therefore, that they are not prepared to help the peasants to overthrow landlordism.

Finally, and most important, the bourgeois-democratic revolution in England and France occurred at a time when there was no industrial proletariat in the modern sense. But the bourgeois democratic revolution in backward countries are unfolding at a time when large concentrations of workers already exist in these countries. And these workers are in daily conflict not only with the imperialist owners of capital but with the local bourgeoisie. The workers moreover, being a product not only of indigenous capital, but also and in fact, predominantly—of foreign capital, have as a class grown to a degree out of all proportion to the size of the indigenous bourgeoisie. The suspicion and fear engendered by this realisation in the hearts of the indigenous bourgeoisie consequently not only prevents them from leading the bourgeois-democratic revolution but actually drives them

to the camp of the imperialists and landlords on the approach of revolution.

The peasantry, history has taught us, is incapable of leading a revolution. The urban petty bourgeoisie in backward countries is a declining class. The only class, therefore, that can lead the bourgeois-democratic revolution at the head of the peasantry for the overthrow of the power of the emperialists, of landlordism and for the remnants of feudalism is the working class. But this places before the working class the prospect of seizing the power and proceeding with the execution of its socialist tasks, and thus the bourgeois-democratic revolution develops uninterruptedly into the proletarian revolution and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat. In Russia the workers proceeded with their socialist tasks of the expropriation of the capitalists only several months after they had seized the power. In countries like India and China, however, where the imperialists are directly the main owners of capital, we can expect this stage to arise much earlier. The bourgeois democratic stage of the revolution in these countries will be much shorter and the proletarian stage arise much earlier than in Russia.

But the revolution cannot be established even at this stage. The world as we remarked at the outset has today become united in a single inter-connected economic

system. And the contradiction of this world capitalist system can finally be resolved only on a world scale. The working class of any particular country after its victorious seizure of power is immediately faced with the task of effecting a socialist transformation of its property relations and of making the transition to Socialism. But this task it cannot accomplish alone. The international division of labour and the inter-dependence-produced by capitalism itself—of the different parts of world economy, demand that this task of the establishment of socialism can be accomplished only on a world scale. The working class of the victorious country will of course proceed with the socialist transformation so far as it is able under the concrete circumstances, but the establishment of socialism will depend on the spread of the revolution to other countries. In other words, the revolution in one country is a link in the interconnected chain of world revolution. Either the revolution will spread step by step from country to country until it is victorious all over the globe, or it will recede and end ultimately in capitalist counter-revolution. This is Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution, as founded on the experience of the Russian revolution of 1905 and confirmed by the subsequent experiences of Russia, China and Spain.

THE BLOC OF FOUR CLASSES OR THE CHINESE NATIONAL FRONT:

On the basis of the strategy dictated by the theory of permanent revolution and on the basis of the strategy of Lenin and in the Russian revolution, the broad line of policy should have been clear. It was necessary in China to teach the workers from the very beginning to be mistrustful of the native bourgeoisie, on the outbreak of the revolution to organise the workers independently of and against the bourgeoisie in Soviets, to help the peasants to organise in Soviets, to give full support to the peasant movement for the seizure of the land, and with the development of the revolution assured to it by the leadership of the working class, to establish the dictatorship of the proletariat.

But for Stalin the revolution was a bourgeois-democratic revolution which was to be led by the bourgeoisie in the Kuomintang. And the business of the workers, apparently, was to do nothing to impede the bourgeoisie. By the infamous policy of the "National United Front" or the "bloc of four classes" (workers, peasants, urban petty bourgeoisie and "national" bourgeoisie), which is the counterpart of the "National Front" in India, the workers were forced to follow the bourgeoisie, and the Chinese revolution ended in an unmitigated tragedy. *

In February 1917 too, Stalin and the Bolshevik leaders in Russia

In early 1926, Chiang Kai Shek at the head of the Nationalist forces in the South planned to leave Canton in order to defeat the pro-imperialist war-lords of the North and to bring the whole of China under the Koumintang Government. In order to get the help of the Chinese workers and peasants for this campaign, Chiang needed the support of the Comintern which the Chinese masses trusted.

But on March 20th 1926 Chiang Kai Shek with a sudden military coup seized the power in Canton, disarmed the Strike Committee headquarters, imprisoning the Communist Party leaders and other left-wingers. The Communists however learned nothing from this experience. In May they came to an

believed that the Russian revolution was only a bourgeois-democratic revolution and that Russia could not by her own forces proceed to the proletarian revolution. Since this was not substantially different from the position of the Mensheviks, Stalin actually prepared proposals for the merging of the Bolsheviks and Menshevik parties. Till the arrival of Lenin in April the Bolsheviks played the role of a constitutional Opposition party to the bourgeois Provisional Government. Lenin of course changed all this and set the party on the road to proletarian revolution. Stalin, Zinoviev, Kamenev and others at first opposed him, but soon gave in.

agreement with Chiang. They promised not to criticise the anti-class struggle doctrines of Sun Yat Sen (the now dead Chinese nationalist leader) and to give a list of Communist Party members to Chiang. Members of the Communist Party were in future not to hold any important position in the Kuomintang or in the Government. And members of the Kuomintang were forbidden to join the Communist Party.

There were protests in the Chinese Communist Party. The necessity of a change of course became apparent even to the leaders. In June 1926 the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party adopted a decision to withdraw from the Kuomintang and to continue work by means of a bloc with it from outside. This was however peremptorily over-ruled by the leadership of the Comintern. Even the organisation of Left-wing fractions within the Kuomintang was forbidden. Borodin, the representative of the Comintern in China declared "The present period is one in which the Communists should do coolie service for the Kuomintang" ! (Isaac's- The Tragedy of the Chinese Revolution). The Communist Party was thus tied firmly to the Kuomintang itself and the workers and peasants to the bourgeoisie.

Having thus tied hand and foot the revolution in the South,

Chiang embarked on his Northern campaign with the full support of the Communists. He received the enthusiastic support of the workers and peasants on his journey, thanks to the prestige of the Russian revolution and the Soviet State which he was able to exploit through his association with the Comintern. But he forbade the Communist Party from agitating for Soviets or the confiscation of the land, and permitted agitation only for increased wages and rent reduction. In October 1926 the Moscow leadership wired the Chinese Communists to keep the peasant movement in check in order not to alienate the Generals. Some months earlier, soon after the March coup the Politbureau of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union had—with Trotsky alone opposing—approved the admission of the Kuomintang as a “sympathising party” into the Communist International”.

In Canton, the bourgeois Canton Government had in the meantime called off both strike and boycott, after a struggle of over 15 months. Regulations were issued providing for compulsory arbitration of trade disputes, forbidding workers to possess arms and to picket workplaces. The Communist Party, anxious to propitiate the Government, raised no protest.

THE SHANGHAI INSURRECTION :

In February 1927 the revolutionary workers of Shanghai hearing of the triumphant approach of Chiang whom they had been taught to regard as the military general of the revolution, made a spontaneous general strike, 300 000 workers participating. The reactionary military governor of Shanghai embarked on a campaign of widespread repression and shooting of the workers. Meanwhile Chiang who had professedly come to Shanghai to defeat the reactionary military government there, had arrived at the gates of the city. But the "revolutionary general" made no attempt to come to the aid of the workers. The workers' strike was brutally crushed. But their organisations were still intact and on March 21st the heroic workers rose again on one last great effort, and completely defeated and drove out the reactionary forces. All of Shanghai with the exception of the International Settlement and the French Concession, was in their hands. More than half a million workers were ready to rise as one man at a word from the Union headquarters in defence of their conquests. They even set up a provisional government, apparently fully under Communist control.

On March 24th Chiang entered Shanghai and entered immediately into negotiations with Chinese bankers and merchants and the imperialists in order to make a bloody

settlement with the workers. The Communists in a desperate effort to placate him organised a reception and banquet in his honour, which he did not condescend to attend. Instead he was busy organising his forces for the attack. Gangsters of the Shanghai underworld were organised, Soldiers sympathetic to the workers were replaced by fresh and 'loyal' battallions. The Communists of Shanghai, still acting under Stalin's orders, made no attempt even now to warn the workers against the danger that was impending. No propaganda was attempted among Chiang's own soldiers, though not inconsiderable sections of them were already sympathetic to the workers.

In Moscow, Trotsky and the Opposition were warning against a counter-revolutionary blow and demanding the unconditional independence of the Chinese Communists. On April 3rd Trotsky submitted an article "Class relations in the Chinese revolution" warning against Chiang the "Chinese Pilsudski" and demanding immediate withdrawal from the Kuomintang. The article was refused publication. On April 5th in a speech in the Hall of Columns in Moscow Stalin himself replied as follows to the Opposition that the Soviet public were not permitted to hear: "Chiang Kai Shek is submitting to discipline. The Kuomintang is a bloc, a sort of revolutionary parliament, with the Right, the Left, and the Communists. Why make a coup d'etat? Why drive away the Right when we have

the majority and when the Right listens to us ?.... Chiang Kai Shek has perhaps no sympathy with the revolution, but he is leading the army and cannot do otherwise than direct it against the Imperialists'. (see Issac's—The Tragedy of the Chinese Revolution—for the account of the suppression of this speech by Stalin when his words were refuted by events ten days later).

However, when the inevitability of a blow became apparent, the Executive Committee of the Comintern, still attempting to avoid a conflict with Chiang, wired to the Chinese Communists not to give up their arms, indeed not to use them, but to hide them. The revolutionary troops of the 1st Division whom Chiang had ordered to leave Shanghai were prepared to defy the orders and to stay behind to fight alongside the workers. But in view of the above instructions the Communist leaders did not accept the offer. The troops were transferred. On April 12th Chiang launched his terror on the workers of Shanghai. The Communist Party, the trade unions, and all workers organisations were completely and thoroughly smashed. The Communist Party had nothing to tell the workers. Without leadership, some offered no resistance. Others fought and were massacred.

As an epitaph to the Shanghai massacre Stalin

announced on April 21st that "events have fully and entirely proved the correctness" of the Comintern line (The Questions of the Chinese Revolution, by Stalin, published in International Press Correspondence of April 28th 1927).

THE WUHAN DEBACLE :

The Opposition, led by Trotsky, had all along demanded that the Communist Party should withdraw from the Kuomintang and should put forward the slogan of Soviets, since the Soviets are the only form of organisation that, drawing as they do, the wide masses of the toilers into them, can generate the strength to meet the blows of the reactionaries as well as to take the revolution forward. The Shanghai defeat had strikingly if not tragically demonstrated the correctness of the analysis of the Opposition. But the Shanghai defeat, though it was a staggering blow to the revolution need not have been fatal. In Hupeh and Hunan provinces the revolutionary tide among the peasantry was gathering force, and the workers here were capable of supplying leadership to the peasants.

But even now, after the example of Shanghai, the Comintern refused to recognise the necessity for the withdrawal of the Communist Party from the Kuomintang. Faith was now placed in the petty bour-

geois government of Wang Chin Wei and others in Wuhan, and efforts were concentrated on turning this "Left" section against Chiang "...the revolutionary Kuomintang in Wuhan", now wrote Stalin, "will in fact be converted into an organ of the revolutionary democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry...(we must adopt) the policy of concentrating the whole power in the country in the hands of the revolutionary Kuomintang". The slogan of soviets was inadmissible, continued Stalin. This would mean "issuing the slogan of a fight against the existing power in this territory...of the fight against the power of the revolutionary Kuomintang" (Stalin—The Questions of the Chinese Revolution). On May 18th at the 8th Plenum Trotsky declared, "The leaders of the Left Kuomintang of the type of Wang Chin Wei and Co. will inevitably betray you if you follow the Wuhan heads instead of forming your own independent soviets. The agrarian revolution is a severe thing. Politicians of the Wang Chin Wei type, under difficult conditions, will unite ten times with Chiang Kai Shek against the workers and peasants"—(Problems of the Chinese Revolution by Trotsky). Prophetic words, which were to be fulfilled in the space of two months.

The land question was the most important and immediate question facing the Chinese revolution. The

petty bourgeois government at Wuhan however, had no intention of giving the peasants the land. They only passed a paper resolution to make a 24 percent reduction on land rent. The Communists concurred. At this time a mass upsurge of the peasantry was developing which in strength and magnitude is comparable only with the rising of the peasantry in the Russian revolution. The land was seized, landlords driven off, peasants' courts, peasant committees and peasant associations set up, women liberated, foreign missionaries packed off, and superstitions swept away in the mighty storm of the peasant revolt. Ten million peasants were drawn into the peasant organisation. But a peasant war, as we know, cannot achieve victory unless there is a more advanced class there to lead it. And the Comintern, by tying the class to the bourgeoisie in the Kuomintang, prevented the workers from supplying this leadership.

Towards the end of May the troops of the feudal militarists raided the labour headquarters in Changsha, the capital of the province of Hunan, and killed hundreds of workers and peasants. On receiving this news thousands of peasants armed themselves and marched on Changsha, but were persuaded to disperse at the request of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party. Reaction now worked

its revenge. The landlords came back with the militarists and in the course of the next few months over twenty thousand peasant men and women were killed in Hunan. After Changsha the terror spread to the province of Hupeh.

By the end of June Wang Chin Wei and the Wuhan Government had come to terms with Chiang Kai Shek and agreed to exterminate the Communists. By the middle of July the attacks on the trade unions were in full swing. Executions followed. Borodin, the Comintern representative who had been sent to guide the Communist Party, hurriedly departed on his long journey to Russia. The Communist leaders fled. In Canton, Shanghai, Changsha, and now in Wuhan, the Chinese masses had seen the Kuomin-tang leaders whom the Communists taught them to regard as friends of the revolution, suddenly change into the cruel butchers of workers and peasants. Reaction now reigned from North to South. The Chinese revolution had been defeated.

The extent of the defeat cannot be measured merely by the actual physical annihilation. The workers and peasants had not merely fallen before a stronger enemy. They had been decapitated by their own leaders by the very men and organisations that the Communists had taught them to trust. The

demoralisation resulting from this, incalculably deepened the effects of the counter-revolution.

But this did not prevent Stalin from writing as follows: "Should the Chinese Communists have set up the slogan six months ago: 'Down with the leadership of the Kuomintang'? No, for that would have been a very dangerous and precipitate step and it would have rendered the approach to the masses more difficult for the Communists, for the masses at that time still believed in the leadership of the Kuomintang... At that time the leadership of the Kuomintang in Wuhan had not achieved its highest point as a bourgeois-revolutionary government and had not yet discredited itself in the eyes of the masses through its fight against the agrarian revolution and by its defection to the counter-revolution.... Should the Chinese Communists now set up the slogan 'Down with the leadership of the Kuomintang'? Yes, of course they must" he ponderously concludes (International Press Correspondence, 4th August 1927). So according to Stalin, the Communist Party must wait passively until the bourgeoisie is exposed by taking the open road to counter-revolution. It little matters, apparently, that the revolutionary vanguard is exterminated. For the bourgeoisie will be exposed! It goes without saying that the workers and peasants could do infinitely better without such leadership.

The Opposition in Russia pointed out that the best that could be done now was to make an orderly retreat as the Bolsheviks had done under the leadership of Lenin after the defeat of the revolution of 1905 in Russia. It was necessary now to conserve the revolutionary forces in preparation for the next mass upsurge, even though that might take years in coming. But the prestige of the Moscow ruling clique had to be maintained. The Opposition was now attacked as liquidationists having no faith in the revolution. It was stated that the Slogan of Soviets was correct now and that the Chinese revolution had entered a higher stage.

The Old Chinese leadership was removed by the Comintern, and new leaders hastily appointed to carry out the new line. Mass expulsion of Chinese Communists who refused to accept the new line, took place. A series of armed uprisings were now organised which never had a chance of success and all ended in crushing defeat. The masses, instead of making the tremendous response that was expected, simply refused to co-operate.

THE CANTON MASSACRE :

The correctness of the criticisms of the Opposition was being demonstrated at every step. After the series of blunders and defeats, the Moscow leadership

was now imposing a policy of putschist adventures in a desperate effort to save their face. The most tragic of these disasters was at Canton.

Canton was the last industrial city in which the Communists still had a following. Though small in number, they consisted of those workers who had stuck to the Communist Party through all the difficulties and defeats. They constituted the best elements of the Canton proletariat and would have provided a splendid base for the slow and difficult tasks of the future. But the Opposition had to be proved wrong and Stalin correct. Under direct instructions from Moscow the policy of insurrection was applied to Canton. If the mass insurrections of history, and particularly the October insurrection, can teach us anything, it is that although the technical preparation of insurrection can be made to order, it cannot be successfully carried out except in conjunction with and indeed at the peak of the mass movement. But the Comintern leadership thought otherwise.

The Canton insurrection was timed to take place at the same time as the meeting of the 15th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, at which it was to be proved that the Chinese revolution had entered a higher stage. It is difficult to believe that this was accidental. On December 11th the Canton

Communists and their militant working class followers, in all numbering no more than a few thousand, staged an insurrection. A Soviet Government was declared. But the ill-fated Canton Commune as it afterwards came to be known, was not destined to last long. The masses who had accomplished miracles of revolutionary heroism in the Canton-Honkong strike of a year ago had by now been disillusioned and demoralised. They merely stood aside and watched while the flower of the Canton proletariat fought a hopeless battle against Kuomintang troops numbering well over 50,000. About 1500 people escaped. The remainder stood their ground until the last of them was slaughtered by the attackers in the afternoon of December 13th. After the overcoming of the last resistance the terror was let loose on the men, women and children of working class Canton. The exact number of killed is not known. The final toll of the counted dead was 5700.

Reaction now reigned supreme. Under the Kuomintang terror men, women, children were mutilated, tortured, imprisoned and killed. It is estimated that between 1927 and 1930 over 100,000 were killed.

So great and disastrous was the defeat under the leadership of Stalinism that the Chinese workers have not recovered to this day. The defeated Com-

munists and worker militants who escaped from Canton and other cities now made their way to the mountainous districts of the central provinces and there formed partisan armies. With the spread of the peasant revolt to these previously untouched areas they formed peasant soviets and declared the widely separated areas under their control "Soviet China". But all this belongs to a period when the bureaucracy in Moscow, having suffered defeat after defeat in the international as well as the national field by their rightist mistakes, had been compelled by circumstances to change their policy of going to the other extreme, and embarked on a policy of ultra-leftism. It suffices to mention here that the peasant soviets of Red China without the workers in the towns to supply leadership, were doomed to defeat. The fact that it took Chiang Kai Shek six years to defeat them does not disprove the elementary truth of Marxism that the peasantry alone cannot accomplish a revolution. It is only a testimony to the heroism and self-sacrifice of the downtrodden Chinese peasantry. It also provides us with a glimpse of what might have been possible if the proletariat in the towns, following a policy independent of the bourgeoisie had formed a worker-peasant alliance under its own leadership.

* * *

The Russian revolution had demonstrated the correctness of the theory of permanent revolution. The Chinese revolution of 1925-27 provided added confirmation,

though from the negative side. It proved that a backward country could accomplish its bourgeois democratic revolution only by the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat. The "democratic dictatorship of proletariat and peasantry", a formula which Lenin had abandoned in time to save the Russian revolution, was demonstrated in China to be nothing more than the Dictatorship of the bourgeoisie. That the victory of the revolution can be accomplished not by "national fronts" but by the leadership of the proletariat in the bourgeois democratic revolution and the uninterrupted development of the latter into the proletarian revolution is the chief lesson to be learnt from the tragic experience of China.

Chapter Five

THE RISE OF THE BUREAUCRACY:

We have sketched the disastrous policy of ultra-leftism pursued by the Comintern from 1923 to 1925 and the even more disastrous rightist policy adopted subsequently, culminating in the tragic fate of the Chinese revolution. We have observed that these defeats were the direct result of the disregard of the strategic lessons of Marxism as developed by Lenin and Trotsky. How had it come about that the revolutionary International founded by Lenin had declined in this manner? We remarked earlier that no political trend grows in a vacuum, and found it necessary to discover the social bases of the opportunism of the 2nd International in its period of decline. Similarly no Marxist analysis of the 3rd International is complete without an attempt to discover the social basis—that is, the real historical reason—for its decline.

The Russian working class, by the privilege of its historical backwardness, as we might say, was able to make its revolution before any of the advanced countries of the West. But the moment it had made the leap ahead of these countries it found itself forced to bear

the full consequences of its own backwardness. That is to say, the Russian working class, a minority in a predominantly peasant country, on coming to power was faced with the problems of a low level of productivity in industry, a small scale and primitive agriculture, an exceedingly poor system of transport, illiteracy, and a host of other problems cultural as well as economic which were the heritage left to it by Czarism. To add to these difficulties, the Russian workers who had received the country in an exhausted condition after three years of imperialist war, were compelled for another three years to fight the armies of capitalist intervention at enormous cost to the country. The Russian working class might still have been able to solve the pressing problems before them if they had been helped, as their leaders had expected, by the spread of the revolution to the advanced European countries. However, although the revolutionary wave in Europe proved sufficient to save the young workers' state in the first and most critical period of its existence, nevertheless the revolution failed to conquer and gain a foothold in Europe. In these circumstances the ebb of the world revolution was reflected also within the workers' state. There arose within the Communist party and the Soviets a bureaucracy, which substituted itself for the masses, and which proceeded to usurp the masses of political power by destroying internal democracy in the party, converting the Soviets into the instruments

of the bureaucrats, and concentrating power in its hands.*

LENIN SEES THE DANGER:

Lenin with his customary perspicacity was the first to note the alarming trend of the growth of bureaucracy and to warn against it. As early as January, 1921, in an article on the trade union question, he wrote, "A workers' state is an abstraction. Actually we have a workers' state; with this peculiarity, firstly, that it is not the working class population that predominate in the country, but the peasant population; and, secondly, it is a workers' state with the bureaucratic distortions". (Selected Works of Lenin. Vol. 9, page 33).

In the spring of 1921, Lenin had introduced the change from War Communism to the policy of NEP. The measures of premature socialism had been necessary during the period of civil war, and the peasant had supported these extreme measures because he knew that the defeat of the Bolsheviks would mean his losing the land. But once the civil war was over and the land safe, the peasant began first of all to refuse to produce and then to revolt. Under NEP Lenin abolished the system of requisition of

* There are few million such functionaries today. Their number is greater than the number of workers at the time of the October revolution.

grain, allowed the peasant to pay a tax in kind, and by degrees gave the peasant the right to trade.* NEP was a retreat, and a necessary retreat. But it had its danger. It gave an impetus to the development of the Kulak class and to the birth of new layers of exploiting elements in the Soviet Union. This factor accentuated the growth of the bureaucracy, which began to lean more and more on the kulaks, intellectual strata and labour aristocracy.

After the first victories of the Soviet regime had become apparent a large number of people who had nothing in common with revolution had found their way into the party. Lenin had drawn attention to this in 1921. "The party must be purged of rascals and bureaucrats" he wrote, "of dishonest or wavering communists", and of Mensheviks who have repainted their "facade" but who in their hearts have remained Mensheviks" ("Purging the Party, Selected Works, Vol. 9). In March 1922, when the policy of NEP was in full swing he deemed it necessary to repeat this warning. In a letter to Molotov demanding a longer period of probation for new members, he writes .. "our party is less politically train-

* It was in fact Trotsky who first saw the necessity of changes in War Communism. He made a proposal in 1920 to have a graduated tax on the peasants instead of requisition and to provide them with cheaper industrial goods. The Central Committee at the time however, rejected the proposal.

ned than is necessary for real proletarian leadership in the present difficult situation, especially in view of the overwhelming preponderance of the peasantry, which is rapidly awakening to independent class politics". (New condition of Party Membership, Selected Works, Vol. 9).

In the middle of 1922 Lenin fell ill and was away from work for five months till October. In this period of absence he was able to see more clearly than anyone else what was wrong with the party. He saw the monstrous growth of bureaucratic power and its concentration in the hands of the Organisation Bureau of the Central Committee, which was in Stalin's charge as General Secretary of the party from 1921. Lenin saw that Stalin had made use of his absence to build around him, by the onesided selection of men, a numerous faction of personal supporters. Lenin came back in October with the firm determination of fighting these back stage manoeuvres of the Secretariat. But after only a few weeks, bad health forced him again to retire from the field of activities. It was then (January, 1923) that he wrote his letter to the party which came to be known as his Testament. Here, he demands the removal of Stalin from the post of General Secretary.

"Comrade Stalin, having become General Secretary, has concentrated an enormous power in his hands; and I

am not sure that he always knows how to use that power with sufficient caution", he wrote. "Stalin is too rude, and this fact, entirely supportable in relations among us communists, becomes unsupportable in the office of General Secretary. Therefore I propose to the Comrades to find a way to remove Stalin from that position and appoint another man who in all respects differs from Stalin only in superiority—namely, more patient, more loyal, more polite, and more attentive to comrades, less capricious, etc.", he wrote in the postscript. (The Suppressed Testament of Lenin—Pioneer Publishers).

As long as there remained a glimmer of hope for Lenin's recovery his wife Krupskaya kept the document under lock and key. In 1924, after Lenin's death she handed it over to the Secretariat of the Central Committee with the request that it should be placed before the party Congress. Despite the insistence of Krupskaya this was not done. And after the reading of the document to a selected number of party leaders, the publication of the document was prohibited. The document has, however, seen the light of day, thanks to the Left Opposition.*

* Since the very existence of the Testament has been denied by Stalinists on various occasions where the situation permits them to do so, it may not be superfluous to add that if further verification is desired, the inquiring reader can refer to the article "The Right

In his last article "Better less but Better" (4th March 1923), as a counter to the rising bureaucracy Lenin demands the reorganisation of the People's Commissariat of Workers' and Peasants' Inspection, of which the Commissar was Stalin. He says that it is inevitable that this reform will meet the resistance of "all our bureaucracy", both the Soviet and the party bureaucracy. "We have a bureaucracy" he adds, "not only in the Soviet institutions, but in the party institutions".

In March 1923, Lenin's health finally broke down and he died in January 1924. During these months Stalin—in alliance with Zinoviev and Kamenev—concentrated his personal hold by the intensive bureaucratisation of the party apparatus. The party bureaucracy and the bureaucracy of the State organisation were steadily fused into one. When Lenin died, the bureaucracy headed by Stalin were already in control of the party.

If Lenin had lived, there is no doubt that the bureaucracy would not have won so easily. But it is a matter for speculation to what extent even he, with his

Deviation in the CPSU" appearing in Vol 2 of "Leninism" by Stalin himself. Here Stalin uses a quotation from Lenin's letter to discredit Bukharin's abilities as a theorician when he had no longer need of his services. Reference can also be found to the Testament in a speech by Stalin appearing in International Press. Correspondence of November 17, 1927.

enormous prestige, would have been able to influence the course of events. There is a limit to the role of individuals, however great and powerful, in history. On this question, we can do no better than quote from Trotsky's introduction to Lenin's Testament published by the Left Opposition.

"The course of subsequent events in the Kremlin and in the Soviet Union was determined not by a single document, even though it were the testament of Lenin, but by historical causes of a far deeper order. A political reaction after the enormous effort of the years of the insurrection and the civil war was inevitable. The concept of reactions must here be strictly distinguished from the concept of counter-revolution. Reaction does not necessarily imply a social overturn—that is, a transfer of power from one class to another. Even Czarism had its periods of progressive reform and its periods of reactions. The mood and orientations of the ruling class changes according to circumstances. This is true also of the working class. The pressure of the Petty-bourgeoisie upon the the proletariat tired from the tumult entailed a revival of petty bourgeois tendencies in the proletariat itself and a deep wave of reaction on the crest of which the present bureaucratic apparatus headed by Stalin rose to power."

THE LEFT OPPOSITION :

The Left Opposition took shape for the first time as a distinct political grouping in the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1923, headed by Leon Trotsky. The 10th Party Congress under Lenin's direction had adapted a resolution for the vigorous execution of the policy of party democracy. The 12th Congress had in 1922 reaffirmed this resolution, but nothing had been done to implement it.

Consequently, on October 8th 1923, Trotsky wrote a letter to the Central Committee of the party expressing his views of this subject and on the national economy." In the fiercest moments War of Communism the system of appointment within the party did not have one tenth of the extent it has now. Appointments of the secretaries of provincial committees is now the rule. That creates for the secretary a position essentially independent of the local organisation..... A very broad strata of party workers has been created, entering into the governing apparatus of the party who completely renounce their own party opinion, before whom every decision stands in the nature of a summons or command," wrote Trotsky. He was followed by a letter signed by 46 party leaders who joined hands with him on most of the essential ideas he had set down.

Soon after, Trotsky was surrounded by a group

which came to be known as the "Moscow Opposition" and which was in fact the beginning of the Left Opposition. Their aim was a genuine application of the resolution on party democracy and the co-ordination of industry with agriculture on the basis of a plan in economy.

"Trotsky pointed out that the workers' republic could overcome the obstacle of a primitively organised and managed agriculture and enter the broad highway towards socialism, only by laying a solid foundation in the form of a big scale machine industry. With such a base, the proletariat would be able to satisfy the needs of the peasantry for cheap manufactured products. By pursuing a policy of systematically reducing the economic and political importance of the exploiting peasants (the kulaks) it would commence in earnest the socialist transformation of an agriculture provided with the technical equipment of large industry.

"To accomplish these ends, Trotsky recommended the centralisation of national economy and its harmonious direction by means of a national longterm plan, pointing to the success attained in 1920 by planned economy in the field of restoring the efficiency of railroad transportation". (Max-Shachtmann—History and Principles of the Left Opposition).

But the party apparatus was already in the control of the bureaucracy. What Trotsky wrote was twisted beyond recognition. He was accused of factionalism, of pitting the "Old Guard" against the Youth, of "underestimating the peasantry". Trotsky's supporters were removed from every position of influence and subjected to intimidation in office and in factory. Students were expelled from the Universities. The Red Army was purged. Rakovsky was sent to London, Krestinsky to Berlin. Lenin had said that more workers should be introduced into the party. In January 1924 Stalin's secretariat shepherded 100,000 raw recruits into the party, and in May another 100,000 more. All were given the power to vote. The result of the 13th Party Congress held in May 1924 was a foregone conclusion. The Opposition were defeated. The Publication of Lenin's Testament, which Krupskaya had vainly attempted to have placed before the Conference, was prohibited.

In October 1924, Trotsky published his "Lessons of October. This was the signal for a widespread and concerted attack on him. The bogey of "Trotskyism" was invented. It was stated that "Trotskyism" was opposed to Leninism. The pre-war differences between Lenin and Trotsky were raked up, exaggerated, distorted, and a flood of articles and pamphlets let loose on a surprised public. The workers were

confused and bewildered by the attacks on Trotsky whom they had learned to regard as co-leader with Lenin in the October revolution, organiser of the Red Army, and the foremost Bolshevik leader next to Lenin. But the workers were exhausted by the efforts in the period of civil war and they had received a crushing blow with the defeat of the German proletariat in 1923. The German defeat no doubt hastened the defeat of the Opposition. On the other hand, supporting the bureaucracy were the new class of kulaks and the traders in the towns, who had grown up under NEP.

But it took four years to drive the Left Opposition out of the party. The names of Lenin and Trotsky were too closely associated and the traditions of Leninism too deeply rooted.

ZINOVIEV AND KAMENEV JOIN THE OPPOSITION :

Zinoviev and Kamenev in their role of old and very close colleagues of Lenin, had been the spear-head of the anti-Trotsky drive which commenced in 1924 but in 1925 differences began to develop between the Zinoviev-Kamenev group and the centrist group of Stalin. Matters came to a head on the question of Stalin's theory of Socialism in one country. Zinoviev and Kamenev opposed this un-Marxist and anti-Leninist theory. Leaning on the "Rights" in the party?

(Bukharin, Rykov, and others), Stalin commenced his drive against Zinoviev and Kamenev at the end of 1925.

In 1926, alarmed at the turn of events, and under pressure of the revolutionary Leningrad proletariat, Zinoviev and Kamenev came over to the Left Opposition, acknowledging that the "Trotskyists" had been right on all fundamental questions. They were joined in this step by a large group of Bolsheviks. A united opposition was formed on the basis of the "Platform of the Opposition" to which we shall have occasion to refer later. It was in this period that Zinoviev stated that fighting Trotsky had been the "greatest mistake of his life". He also admitted that the legend of "Trotskyism" had been invented as an instrument in the struggle for power. Krupskaya who had also joined the Opposition in 1925, declared "Were Lenin alive, he would most assuredly be in a G. P. U. prison".

There was an accretion of strength of the Opposition. After the coming over of Zinoviev, practically the whole of the Leningrad party organisation supported the Opposition. But the party bureaucracy, now possessed of great power was solidly for Stalin.* The kulak traders, who had grown at an alarming rate, between 1924 and 1927, were all, naturally, supporters of Stalin against the Opposition. Utilising all the forces of the party and

the state at his disposal Stalin set out to smash the Opposition. The entire Leningrad Committee was arbitrarily displaced. The Opposition platform was refused publication as an anti-party document. Imprisonment and exile followed for infringing party discipline. Every kind of pressure was brought to bear on Oppositionists by the bureaucratic machine. In the 1927 demonstration in Moscow and other large towns on the anniversary of the October revolution, Oppositionists who marched with the slogan "Fulfil the Testament of Lenin" were set upon and dispersed by specially selected troops. Trotsky was fired on in the street. Oppositionists meetings were broken up by gangs organised by party committees.

In November 1927 the Oppositionists were expelled from the party. In December the 15th Congress ratified the action of the leadership. Trotsky and many other leaders were exiled. Zinoviev and Kamenev capitulated, were pardoned, and re-commenced their denunciations of "Trotskyism". The terror fell on the worker Oppositionists, driving them underground. By 1929 there were 5000 Oppositionists in prison. The Bolshevik party of Lenin was no more. *

* In the 7 years between the February revolution of 1917 and the death of Lenin (Jan. 1924) the Bolshevik party held 8 regular party congresses and 7 conferences. The 15th Congress of December

SOCIALISM IN A SINGLE COUNTRY

The rise of the bureaucracy usurping the party and the masses, was reflected quite early in the theoretical field by the appearance of the theory of Socialism in single country.

The very idea that socialism could be established in a single country is alien to the literature of revolutionary Marxism as well as to the entire history of Bolshevism. The Bolsheviks of course recognised the possibility of a *seizure of power* by the proletariat in a single country, while capitalist rule still remained undefeated in the others. From April 1917 they worked for such a seizure of power in Russia and in October took the lead in its achievement. But they never confused the "dictatorship of the proletariat with the "establishment of Socialism". They never maintained that it was possible to build socialism in Russia, except through the international revolution. The dependence of the revolution in Russia on the international revolution was frankly acknowledged by all the leaders of the Bolshevik Party in their writings and speeches both in the days of the October insurrection and afterwards.

1927 was held after a lapse of two years after the 14th Congress. The 16th Congress was held 2½ years later. Between the 16th and 17th Congresses (Jan. 1934) nearly, 4 years was allowed to lapse. The 18th Congress was held... The same practice, as we shall see, was applied to the Congresses of the International.

Of the numerous statements of Lenin on this subject it is necessary only to quote the following written in March 1922 in order to make clear his views. "We have not completed even the foundation of socialist economy. This can still be taken away by the hostile forces of a dying capitalism. We must be clearly aware of this and openly acknowledge it..... There is absolutely nothing terrible, nothing offering a legitimate cause for the slightest discouragement, in recognising this bitter truth; for we have always taught and repeated this elementary truth of Marxism, that for the victory of Socialism the combined efforts of the workers of several advanced countries are necessary"—("On Ascending a High Mountain". Lenin-Selected Works, Vol. 10. Pages 308-9).

Meanwhile, the programme of Communist Youth in 1921 (ratified by the Politbureau including Lenin, Trotsky and Stalin) states "Russia although possessing enormous natural resources, is nevertheless in the matter of industry a backward country, in which a petty bourgeois population predominates. It can come to Socialism only through the Socialist world revolution."

In April 1924, in his "Problems of Leninism" Stalin himself echoed this idea of Lenin. "Can we succeed and secure the definitive victory of Socialism in one country without the combined efforts of the proletarians of several advanced countries? Most certainly not. The

efforts of a single country are enough to overthrow the bourgeoisie; this is what the history of our revolution proves. But for the definitive triumph of Socialism, the organisation of Socialist production, the efforts of one country alone are not enough particularly of an essentially rural country like Russia; the efforts of the proletarians of several advanced countries are needed."

But in October 1924, less than a year after the death of Lenin, Stalin for the first time in the history of Bolshevism invented the theory that Socialism was possible in a single country. In April 1925 the theory was made party policy. Trotsky, Zinoviev, Kamenev, Lenin's widow Krupskaya and a host of other old Bolshevik leaders opposed this deviation from Marxism. The Opposition pointed out that this error would serve as the starting point for leading the party away from Marxism and the goal of international revolution. In vain, people held up their hands and voted for this anti-Marxian reactionary theory as the policy of Lenin. Bureaucratic control of the party had strangled it. Internationalism, the corner-stone of Bolshevism, was swept away. It was henceforth to exist only as a facade.

If the defeat and expulsion of the Opposition represented the organisational triumph of the bureaucracy, the theory of Socialism in one country represented its ideological triumph. It became for the bureaucracy

the ideological expression of its nationally confined interests. For, if Russia could build socialism by herself, then the world revolution became not a matter of necessity but of benevolent sentiment. Henceforth the main business of the Comintern would be not revolution but the "defence of the U. S. S. R." The theory of Socialism in one country cleared the way for the abandonment of the aim of world revolution by the Comintern, and its substitution by the policy of securing the defence of the U. S. S. R. by the Red Army and pacts with capitalist governments. The fate of the Communist International as a revolutionary organisation was sealed. With the triumph of the bureaucracy in 1928 it was transformed into an instrument for serving the day to day foreign policy of the Soviet bureaucracy in callous disregard of the needs of the international working class movement. By that same token, the real defence of the Soviet Union, which depends on international revolution, was sacrificed.

Chapter Six

THE FIVE YEAR PLAN :

Owing to the fog which the Comintern has shed over the controversies of the years 1923-27, and the one-sided flood of publicity bestowed on the truly great achievements of construction in the Soviet Union, it is popularly but wrongly believed that Stalin and his faction were the originators of the ideas of planning and industrialisation. The truth is, however, quite otherwise. The idea of industrialisation with a long term plan was one of the main planks in the agitation of the Left Opposition since 1923, and was vehemently opposed by the bureaucrats. It was only in 1925 that the bureaucracy were forced by economic and social forces more powerful than themselves to put into effect the main proposals of the Opposition which had been expelled only a few months before, but of course, with all the mistakes inherent in bureaucratic inefficiency and theoretical bankruptcy.

THE STALINIST OPPOSITION TO INDUSTRIALISATION PLANNING :

As early as April 1923 Trotsky laid before the 4th Congress of the Party his theses for the elaboration of a single economic plan to industrialise the country and to pave the way for the collectivisation of

agriculture. He pointed out that the greatest weakness in Russian economy was the preponderance of a backward and individualist agriculture. This weakness could progressively be decreased only to the extent that it was possible to develop industry and especially heavy industry. For this a State plan of industry was necessary. Industrialisation was absolutely necessary for the maintenance of the dictatorship of the proletariat. "Trotskysim" being at that time not yet discovered, the theses were passed unanimously. But nothing was done and after the death of Lenin they were openly opposed by Stalin and the bureaucrats in power.

But from 1923 onwards, the Left Opposition continued to point out that Russia's backwardness made speedy industrialisation imperative especially in view of the retardation of the international revolution. In addition, among the peasantry, the rich peasant (kulak) was growing stronger and constituting a danger. This could be countered only by the systematic organisation of the poor peasants in collectives. A comprehensive plan of industrial progress, that could reorganise agriculture, supply cheap goods to the peasantry and provide the basis for the abolition of the petty bourgeois strata of the village population was imperative.

In 1925, in his book, "Whither Russia" Trotsky made

a detailed analysis of the tremendous possibilities for progress which the concentration of power in the hands of the proletarian dictatorship offered, even on the basis of an isolated workers' state. He pointed out that on the basis of Socialist accumulation the Soviet republic could show a speed of industrial progress unknown to capitalism. Such a rate of progress was possible on account of firstly, the practical absence of parasitic social classes;* secondly, the abolition of the principle of private property, placing all productive forces at the disposal of the state; thirdly, the technical improvements made possible by a State plan; and fourthly, the ability by means of a plan to reduce the effect of crises. "These four advantages, he wrote, "correctly utilised, will provide us with the opportunity, in the coming years of increasing the rate of our industrial expansion not merely to double the pre-war 6 per-cent but to three times that figure and perhaps were more". (Trotsky-Whither Russia).

But Trotsky's ideas were ridiculed by the bureaucracy. This did not however prevent them from levelling against Trotsky at the same time, the two

* Trotsky of course, at that time had not yet perceived the growth of a parasitic bureaucratic caste with special privileges and a standard of living becoming more and more widely separated from that of the masses, which was destined to consume an ever increasing proportions of the national income. *

contradictory charges that he was opposed to the building of Socialism in Russia and that his proposals for industrialisation were too extreme. Devoid of incentive and persisting in their philistine ignorance, the bureaucracy opposed the idea of planning. Leaning more and more on the growing class of kulaks, they opposed industrialisation, but the kulak class was growing in strength in the countryside as well as permeating a section of the party with its ideology. The kulak danger, which the Opposition had warned against, was to be demonstrated in a spectacular manner before long.

THE PLATFORM OF THE OPPOSITION :

At last, in 1926, a 5-year plan drawn up by Rykov and adopted by the party leaders, was produced. This meagre plan proposed a rate of increase of 9 per cent for the first year and a decreasing percentage each year till a 4 per cent increase was to be reached at the end of the period.

The 1927 Platform of the Opposition categorically rejected this worthless plan which did not recognise the tremendous possibilities of advance inherent in the gains of October revolution. It pointed out that the means for a greater rate of growth could be found by a forced loan from the kulaks, a cutting down of overhead charges and expenses of the bureaucratic

apparatus, and by a correct utilisation of the foreign trade monopoly. "To bring forward on the anniversary of the October revolution such a parsimonious, through-and-through pessimistic plan really means that you are working against Socialism" stated the Platform.

The Platform embodied an elaborate series of proposals to the party, including a warning against the kulak danger and the necessity of a resolute curbing of his ability to exploit, an exposure of the theory of Socialism of the benefits in one country, how this theory prevented a full utilisation of the benefits of world trade in the period of peace, a demand for adequate preparations for the defence of the Soviet Union, a call for the re-introduction of internal democracy in the party and its regeneration, and finally stating that it stood for the unity of the party.

We have recounted what earlier was the fate of the Platform and of the Oppositionists who put it forward † In January 1928, one month after the 15th Congress that had ratified the expulsion of the Oppositionists, a rising of the kulaks occurred. Emboldened

†The expulsion of the Opposition at the end of 1927 was followed up by a series of expulsions in the International. Treint in France, Van Overstraten in Belgium, Berdiga in Italy, Cannon and Shachtman in America, Maurice Spector in Canada, are some of the more prominent people who were expelled as Trotskyists.

By the expulsion of the Oppositionists, the kulaks refused to deliver their stocks of grain, demanding higher prices than those fixed by the State. They threatened to keep their stocks and starve the cities into submission if their demands were not met with. So effective was their opposition, that armed force had to be employed to requisition grain. Thus in dramatic fashion the correctness of the warning of the Opposition with regard to the kulak danger were demonstrated. It was clear that NEP would no longer work and that the Opposition criticisms had been correct. Faced now with the danger of being crushed by the kulak and urban petty bourgeois strata, the bureaucracy was compelled to make an about-face turn. Stalin was compelled to alter his First Five Year Plan, to embark on a bolder and more far-reaching plan, and to initiate a drive against the kulak.

Stalin now saw the necessity of breaking his Rightist friends. At first cutting the ground under their feet by attacking their supporters, in 1929, he embarked on a frontal attack on the real leaders, Rykov, Bukharin and Tomsky. Before a confounded public the three leaders of the Right were accused of attempting to introduce capitalism into Russia. The President of the Comintern, the head of the Soviet Government, and the leader of the Soviet Trade Unions were now denounced and disgraced as the agents of the

counter-revolution. In Siberia, some of the Left Oppositionist exiles, hearing that Stalin had adopted the main proposals of the Opposition Platform on industrialisation, capitulated, confessed their sins, abjured Trotsky and came back. The more resolute of them who refused to abandon their principles, if they have not died, they are in exile to this day. Trotsky himself, who had been exiled to Alma Ata, was deported in February 1929 from Russia and found asylum in Turkey.

THE FIVE YEAR PLAN THAT CAME SIX YEARS LATE :

The amended Five Year Plan, put into practice six years after it had been proposed by Trotsky and the Opposition, saved the Soviet Union from collapse. A plan for a large increase of industry (particularly heavy industry) and of collectivisation of one fifth of the peasant holdings was proposed.

In the first year of the operation of the plan the successes and the rate of expansion surprised the bureaucrats themselves. In 1925 when Trotsky stated that a rate of growth of 18 per cent or even more was possible he had been derided. Now, stated Stalin, the reactionary character of Trotsky's 18 percent was proved by the figures of 1929-30 which he claimed were 32 per cent. The bureaucracy which had been

mistrustful of industrialisation, now went to the other extreme. The successes that they had never anticipated went to their heads. The world economic crisis which commenced at the end of 1929 meant a catastrophic fall in the prices of raw materials. And it was by the export mainly of these that Russia hoped to pay for her imports of machinery from abroad. Consequently the world economic crisis was a blow to the smooth prosecution of the Five Year Plan. But Stalin now set out to accomplish the Five Year Plan in four years.

The theory of Socialism in one country had hitherto been an instrument against Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution. Now the Stalinists actually began to believe that this was achievable through the Plan. Trotsky and the Opposition, while foretelling the tremendous advantages of construction in a workers' state as compared with what was possible under capitalism, had never exaggerated the possibilities. They had never claimed anything more than that by planned industrialisation the position of the working class in the Soviet Union could be strengthened and that the workers' state could be much more stronger. But the bureaucracy now claimed that at the end of the Second Five Year Plan a Socialist system would be created surpassing the capitalism of Britain, America and Germany !

Trotsky from his exile now warned against the

exaggerated tempo and expectations. Stalin replied accusing Trotsky of Rightism, and set 47 per cent as the rate of increase for the next year! This placed a tremendous burden on the backs of the working class. The resistance of the workers was met by terror. Workers were sentenced to long terms of imprisonment for discipline, and every instrument of repression was utilised to keep up the inhuman tempo.

THE PEASANTRY AND COLLECTIVISATION :

Marx and Engels had even in their time pointed out that the drawing of the peasants into the socialist economy should be done by stages, commencing with co-operative farms, and that the method utilised should be persuasion and not compulsion. This too had always been the attitude of Lenin to the peasantry. The Opposition had pointed out that the rate at which collectivisation could proceed depended upon the growth of industry. For, large scale collective farming could be more economic than peasant cultivation only if industry was able to supply the requisite quantity of technical equipment. Whatever may be the rapidity of growth of Russian industry under planning, it was absurd to imagine that Russia unaided by the more advanced countries would be able for a long time to supply the technical means to collectivise more than a fraction of her predominantly peasant population.

But what did the Stalinist bureaucracy do? The kulaks were deported to Siberia or other regions and the peasants forced into not co-operative farms, but communes.^f In little over a year over fifteen million peasants had been organised in collectives. Stalin however was soon forced to call a temporary halt and to abandon his policy of drawing the peasant straight into the commune, and to organise them instead in the 'artel' form of collective where only land and cattle are collectivised. The forcible collectivisation of peasants, however, was re-commenced. The original proposal to collectivise 20 per cent of the peasantry by the end of the plan was surpassed in two years. The whole Soviet Press triumphantly announced that the peasants had turned to Socialism and that the classless society was approaching. And so Stalin set out to accomplish by administrative decree what Russian industry was incapable of achieving. By the end of 1931 over 60 per cent of the farms had been collectivised.

What was the result of this mad policy? The peasants refused to produce; they slaughtered their cattle rather than take it to the collectives. There were mass shootings and deportations of peasants. Agricultural pro-

^f The Opposition had only proposed stern measures for limitation of the kulak's power to exploit. They realised that measures for liquidation of the kulak before the collective farms were in a position to compensate for the loss in kulak production would have adverse effects on total agricultural output.

ction slumped catastrophically. In 1932 a widespread famine set in. In the end the Stalinists were forced to permit the peasant to carry on his private trade.

For the past so many years it has been announced to the world by the Stalinist press that the collectivisation of the peasants is complete and the classless society established. But nevertheless Stalin and Molotov found it necessary to issue a decree in 1939 threatening the peasants with dire punishment unless they worked 80 to 100 days a year on the collective farms. What does this mean if not that the peasants find it more profitable to work on their own plots rather than to work on the collective? The forced collectivisation of the peasantry has by no means disproved the forecast of the Opposition based on the scientific theory of Marxism. It has only proved more forcibly the inability of one country to attain Socialism in isolation from world economy and confirmed the dependence of the Soviet State on international revolution.

ECONOMIC SELF SUFFICIENCY :

The enormous advances made under the five year plans are a living testimony to the superiority of socialist methods of production over capitalist. But it is important to realise that these advances were made not because of the bureaucracy but inspite of it. The successes were made possible by the chief gains of the October revolution

nationalisation of the means of production and monopoly of foreign trade. The part played by the bureaucracy—the obstinate scepticism they displayed for six years and then the dizzy excesses that led not only to imposing untold burdens on the workers and peasants but also to a disastrous famine—constitute not an asset but a heavy liability. But unfortunately even this does not describe the sum total of the cost of bureaucratic leadership. For in addition to the bureaucratic methods of carrying out the plan was the bureaucratic conception of the plan itself.

Stubbornly striving to make Socialism in one country an economic reality, economic self-sufficiency became the goal of the plan. Even with the vastness of Russia and the variety of its natural resources—which alone made even the posing of such a question possible—the aim of economic self-sufficiency was bound to exact its price in the lowering of productivity. Not to take full advantage of the benefits of world trade so long as such trade was possible, not to realise the advantages of directing efforts towards a production of those commodities in whose production Russia possessed a relative advantage internationally and not a relative disadvantage, and instead to aim at producing all internal needs whatever the labour cost involved was bound to impose unnecessary burdens on the working class and to lower the possible rate of expansion.

That the building of the industry (and especially of heavy industry) was a necessity was obvious. The building of those industries supplying necessaries the import of which would not be possible in time of war, was equally necessary. If the supply of vital and necessary commodities were in this manner provided for, in the event of war, a policy of judicious organisation of the production of substitutes for other less necessary commodities, as capitalist governments do in time of war, is certainly not beyond the capacity of a workers' state. But as for the rest of the economy, to have pursued a policy of producing those commodities most favourable for the purpose of international trade, and consequently to have derived the fullest advantages of world trade at least cost to Russia herself, would indubitably have imposed the least strain on the economy, have contributed vastly more to the raising of the standard of living, and considerably accelerated the rate of expansion. But the Stalinist bureaucracy blind to these elementary truths, intent only on proving the correctness of their theory of Socialism in one country, stubbornly embarked on a plan of economic self-sufficiency and to that extent impeded the success of the economic advance of the country.

Finally it remains to be said that such a plan can achieve its proper results only in co-operation with the masses. The bureaucratic control of the Soviets and trade unions, which meant the substitution of compulsion for co-

operation, of orders from above for mass initiative, of face-saving for genuine criticism, was another liability that the plan had to face. The frequent breakdowns and disorganizations-punished by the bureaucracy as "wrecking" and "sabotage"-of which we hear so much, are the inevitable result of the bureaucratic attempt to substitute itself for the masses. The bureaucracy attempts to solve the problems it has created in its own bureaucratic manner by terror. But no solution is possible on those lines. The solution can only come through the revival of workers' democracy and the utilisation of those now latent forces liberated by the revolution of October 1917.

When one considers the numerous liabilities from which the plan has had to suffer through bureaucratic stubbornness, inefficiency, short-sightedness and callousness, what is surprising is that so great advances have been made despite them. That the Russian workers were able to achieve so much in spite of the follies and brutalities of the bureaucrat is but added proof of the greatness of the social transformation effected by the October revolution, and can only re-inforce the faith of the revolutionist and strengthen his resolve.

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A disproportionate amount of space may appear to have been devoted to international developments in the Soviet Union in a work that claims to be an account and a brief survey of that of the international revolutionary movement.

But the changing policies of the Comintern cannot be understood except in the context of the internal developments of the Soviet Union, with which they have a close and organic connection. The pro-kulak policy till 1928 of the bureaucracy found its reflection in the international field in a Rightist policy of unity with the Social Democrats and "revolutionary" bourgeois leaders in the colonies. With the anti-kulak drive and industrialisation plans from 1929 onwards we find a corresponding 'about turn' to ultra-leftism in the international field. The rise of bureaucracy, we have attempted to show had the most profound implications for the Comintern, which was progressively converted from an organisation for international revolution into a passive instrument of the bureaucracy. Hitherto the policies of the Comintern had but reflected the shifting and vacillating policies of the bureaucracy. But from now on they take a more sinister character. In the succeeding chapters we shall see the Comintern in its final stage of degeneration, in which it proves itself to be the abject instrument of the foreign policy of the Soviet bureaucrats.

Chapter Seven

THE THIRD PERIOD

THE SIXTH CONGRESS:

The 6th Congress of the Comintern was held in July 1928 after an interval of four years. At this Congress an abrupt change was made from the previous policy of rightism—which had commenced in 1925-26—to one of ultra-leftism. It was announced that a new period in the history of the post-war world “the third period” had begun. (The first period had been declared ended in 1924. Now the second period too was over). The Social-Democratic reformists who had been the chief ally in the second period suddenly became the chief enemy. The Congress laid down that the world revolution was imminent, that the workers had lost faith in the Social-Democrats, and that the task of the Communist Parties was now to lead the insurrectionary masses to victory. The defeated Chinese revolution was proclaimed to have entered a newer and higher phase. The third period was declared to be one characterised by the increasing radicalisation of the masses simultaneously in every country. Stalin’s theory of Social Fascism, invented in 1924, and conveniently forgotten in the period of Rightism, was now revived. The Social-

Democrats and not the Fascists were now declared to be the chief enemy.

That the masses in most countries (with the notable exception of China) were showing signs of unrest and preparing the march forward was true. The British General Strike of 1926 and the Chinese Revolution (1925-27), the Opposition had pointed out long ago, had checked the ebb tide of reaction, and heralded new upheavals. Capitalism too, it had added, was heading for crisis. But it would be fantastic to say that the masses were disillusioned with the Social Democrats and were prepared to follow the Communists. That future events would discredit the Social-Democrats who today commanded the allegiance of a majority of the workers, was true. But if their following were to turn to the Communists, a correct application of the tactic of the united front was necessary. Again, no guide could have been better in this regard than the decisions of the 3rd and 4th Congresses of Lenin's time. But the epigones had no need for the teachings of Lenin save to utilise them, torn from their context, for their own bureaucratic purposes.

It is the duty of communists to work in mass organisations, even though these may be under reformist leadership. For when, with the maturing crisis the workers become disillusioned in their leaders, the communists

must be there to lead the workers into the revolutionary path, if this disillusionment is not to lead to demoralisation and defeat. But the isolation of the Communist Parties in the coming years was completed by the disastrous policy of splitting from the Social-Democrated trade unions and forming Red Trade Unions under Communist leadership. Instead of a united front with the "Social-Fascist trade union bureaucracy" there was to be created a "united front from below"—that is, a united front in which the workers following the Social-Democrats were expected to accept Communist leadership.

At the 6th Congress the Comintern Programme drawn up by Bukharin was adopted. It incorporated the theory of Socialism in one country, and prescribed the misleading slogan of 'democratic dictatorship of workers and peasants' (discarded by Lenin in 1917) for colonial and semi-colonial countries. The Draft Programme of the C. I.—A Criticism of Fundamentals", written by Trotsky from his exile in Alma Ata and issued by the Left Opposition, provided a masterly survey of the international movement from 1923-27 and an acute analysis of the burning questions of the movement and particularly of the theory of Socialism in one country. To this day it continues to be the foremost Marxist document of the postwar revolutionary movement. As was to be expected, it was suppressed by Stalin. Those delegates from

abroad who were permitted to see it were not allowed to take a copy of it with them out of Russia. Ultimately a copy had to be smuggled out.

ULTRA-LEFTISM IN THE INTERNATIONAL MOVEMENT :

The adoption of the ultra-leftist policy of the "third period" led as was to be expected, to another series of expulsions in the international field of all those who refused to accept this sudden change of policy. Unlike in the Russian Parties, there were evidently still left in other sections of the International, individuals who refused to realise that their function was blindly to follow the leader in Moscow. Lovestone, Gitlow, and Wolfe, who commanded the allegiance of a majority in the American party were expelled as agents of the American bourgeoisie. Jilek in Czechoslovakia, Doriot and Sellier and all their supporters in France, Bandler and Thalheimer in Germany with many class conscious workers, Kilboom with the bulk of the party in Sweden, Strasser and Schlamm in Austria, Chen Tu Hsiu the founder and leader of the party in China, Nin, Andrade and Maurin in Spain were all expelled from the Comintern. M. N. Roy who had denounced Trotsky as the agent of Chamberlain now found himself denounced in the same manner.

The long series of expulsions mortally wounded the

Comintern sections and stultified their ability not only to act correctly but to think at all. Only the "obedient fools" against whom Lenin had warned were now left. They obediently led the movement to ineffectiveness and isolation in many countries and to its biggest and gravest defeat in Germany.

In China, as we had occasion to remark earlier the Communists in this period pursued a policy of building a Soviet China based on the peasants. The flames of the peasant revolt which had not yet died down provided them with a temporary base for their military operations against the Kuomintang armies of Chiang Kai Shek. Comintern writers have made varied claims with regard to the population of Soviet China. Their figures, varying from 50 million to 60 million are obviously exaggerated. Soviet China was not only remote from the urban centres, but the areas themselves were continually changing according to the fortunes of war. However, the yearly campaigns for five years of Chiang Kai Shek with a large modern army supported by bombing planes of the European Imperialists, were failures. The difficulties of transport in the mountainous country, the support the Red Army received from the peasants and the desertions of Chiang's own troops all combined to upset Chiang's plans.

Nevertheless, only real proletarian leadership of the

agrarian revolt could save it from ultimate disintegration and defeat. And Communist Party leadership was not a substitute for the leadership of the proletariat. The leadership of the workers in the great urban centres was necessary. But the Communists steadily drained away the best elements from the cities into the Chinese Red Army, thus depriving the city workers of their best leaders. The Opposition pointed out correctly that instead of expanding their entire efforts of a peasant war doomed to defeat, the main task of the Communist Party of China was to return to the urban centres and there, bit by bit, by struggling for democratic rights and the workers' most elementary demands, patiently to attempt to build their base once again in the working class. It would be a difficult task but that was the only way by which the Communists could be at the head of the next revolutionary wave. The Opposition were of course denounced as traitors who wanted to dissolve "Soviet China of 90 millions". The Chinese Communists and Red Army fought valiantly, if vainly, for the Chinese revolution that had "entered a higher stage" in the mountainous districts of China's interior. This is the reason why the Communist Party of China to this day has no base in the working class.

In India there developed in this period a mass movement against Imperialism in the form of the Civil Disobedience Movement of 1930-33. Though it was a movement

conducted under the treacherous bourgeois leadership of the Indian National Congress, nevertheless it was a mass movement against Imperialism, and the place of the Communists was inside it. A correct policy of participation in the movement while preserving their organisational identity and freedom of criticism and action with the purpose of developing the movement into a revolutionary assault on Imperialism, was pregnant with possibilities. At all events, the discrediting of the anti-revolutionary bourgeois leadership would have been possible and the position of the Communists enormously strengthened. But a policy, in keeping with the ultra-leftism of the Comintern line, of standing aloof from the mass movement and criticism from outside, resulted in the isolation of the Communists.

The Spanish revolution of 1931 which drove Alfonso from the throne passed by the Communists without noticing them. Their tirades against Social-Fascism did not touch the masses. In country after country, the ultra-leftism of the Comintern resulted in futile and ineffective criticism and only succeeded in further isolating its sections.

It is important to draw a sharp distinction between this ultra-leftism imposed by the bureaucracy on the degenerated Comintern and the ultra-leftism which occurred in Lenin's time, in the first post-war years

of 1920-21. Then, it had been a misguided policy by the young Communist Parties motivated by an honest revolutionary zeal. But in the years 1929-33 it was an open betrayal of the interests of the international proletariat, for which the Stalinist bureaucracy must bear full responsibility.

THE RISE OF FASCISM IN GERMANY

Fascism is a form of government to which the bourgeoisie resorts in the present era of the permanent decline of capitalism, when it finds that the system of government known as bourgeois democracy no longer suffices to maintain its dictatorship. Rudely tearing aside the democratic drapings of the parliamentary system, it institutes the unchallenged supremacy of finance-capital in all state and administrative fields. It destroys not only the advance guard of the working class—the party of the proletariat—but also trade unions and all independent organisations of workers, thus demolishing all the defensive bulwarks of the working class and keeping the entire class in a state of forced disunity and subjection. In developed capitalist countries, however, where powerful trade unions and workers' political parties exist, this transformation cannot be achieved by the normal methods of police terror without immediately inviting a social upheaval. The big bourgeoisie therefore find it necessary, by means of the Fascist movement to utilise against the working

class the dissatisfied petty bourgeoisie and lumpen proletariat that capitalism itself has created, in order to institute its own undisputed sway. In these countries, therefore, Fascism assumes the character of a mass movement of the petty bourgeoisie and gives the appearance of being a movement directed not only against the workers but also against the big bourgeoisie.

German capitalism, restrained from expanding by the defeat in the last war and the Treaty of Versailles, of all countries in the world displayed in the most acute fashion the contradictions of capitalism, in the present epoch. Nevertheless, till 1928, with the financial aid of America, the German bourgeoisie continued to lean on the Social-Democrats and to pin their hopes in bourgeois democracy. However, the devastating effects of the world economic crisis of 1929 on the German bourgeoisie produced a sharp turn in their policy. From then on they began increasingly to support the National Socialist Party of Hitler as the only party capable of saving German capitalism from collapse. The real expansion of the Fascist movement commences precisely from this time when the big bourgeoisie commenced to take the movement under its wing.

The elections of September 1930 first revealed the danger. The Fascists increased their votes by over five million, polling six million votes, that is, as much as the Social-

Democrats, the largest single party in the Reichstag. That the German Communist Party had also increased their votes from four to six million was true. But this only signified that the crisis of capitalism was splitting society into two irreconcilable camps at the expense of the middle parties. (The poll of the Communist Party in fact, increased almost to the very end. But that of the Fascists increased incomparably more). The crisis can be ultimately resolved by the victory either of Fascist reaction or of proletarian revolution. In the meantime, which of these two solutions it was to be depended on the effectiveness of the tactics of the Fascists on the one hand and of the party of the revolutionary proletariat on the other. It is not necessary to endow Hitler and his lieutenants with any extraordinary strategic ability to say that the tactics of the Fascists proved infinitely superior to those of the Communist Party.

The crying need of the hour was for a united front of the working class against the looming danger of Fascism. More specifically, what was required was a united front between the Social Democratic and Communist Parties which together commanded the allegiance of a majority of the working class. Such a united front would immediately alter the correlation of forces. The forces of working class would increase not twofold but tenfold. Under the influence of the forces generated, the

wavering sections of the petty bourgeoisie would be drawn behind the workers. The prospect of the seizure of power would be posed before the workers not merely as a historical necessity but as practical possibility. The moment the imminence of the Fascist danger was removed, the Social Democratic leaders, would no doubt, draw away with alacrity. But what section of the proletariat would they be able to draw with them? With a bold and resolute leadership the Communist Party could lead the workers to the seizure of power.

To ask the question Would they have won, is to mistake Marxism for astrology. At all events, there was every reasonable chance of victory and the alternative was—the tragic result that has followed. The growth of Fascism if it signified anything signified the approaching end of bourgeois democracy. Henceforth, there were only two roads for Germany to travel, that of Fascist reaction or of proletarian revolution, and the necessary first step to her taking the latter road was the creation of the united front.

THE SUICIDAL POLICY OF STALINISM.

After the German defeat, Stalinist apologists have glibly placed the responsibility for the victory of Fascism on the Social Democracy, hoping thereby to absolve themselves from all blame. That the German Social Democ-

eratic Party played a criminal role in the crisis is indubitable. But the Social Democratic Party, though composed of workers, is a bourgeois influence in the working class. It is incapable of revolutionary struggle and can only lead the workers to defeat. And it is precisely to snatch the workers from the demoralising influence of the Social Democracy that the Communist International was created in 1919.

The bureaucracy of the German Social Democratic Party, desiring to preserve the 'status quo' with the comfortable government and trade union jobs it assured them, feared, it is true, the advent of Fascism. But to the end they hoped to defeat the Fascist bands not with the mass organisations at their disposal but with the state police. That the Social Democrats preferred the prospect of maintaining their alliance with the bourgeoisie to entering into a united front with a party they believed to be revolutionary, is clear. But the Social Democratic leaders of no country make united fronts with revolutionary parties until they are forced to do so by the pressure of the masses. And the German Social Democratic leaders were no exception against the Fascists. If the Communist Party had carried on a persistent campaign among the Social Democratic workers, it is indubitable that the leaders would have compelled to enter into a united front, or in the alternative, to lose their mass following.

But the Communist Party, acting in accordance with the decision of the 6th Congress, labelled the Social Democrats (and along with them the Left Opposition who were demanding a united front) as Social Fascists. Instead they prescribed the united front from below. In September 1930, the Rote Fahne (the German Communist daily) declared, "the 14th of September was the high point of the Socialist National movement in Germany. What comes after this can only be decline and fall". But all through 1931 the crisis continued to mature and Hitler's following to increase. The Communists continued to call the Social Democrats the chief enemy, and Red Trade Unions were fostered in opposition to the Social Democratic trade unions. They even tried to outdo the Fascists by taking their chauvinist slogan of scrapping the Versailles Treaty.

In the summer of 1931 in the midst of their campaign against the Social Democrats the Communist Party suddenly sent an ultimatum to the Social Democratic ministers in the Prussian Government demanding a united front between the two parties. The offer, as was to be expected, was refused. The Communists in reply supported the Fascists in their attempt to oust the Social Democratic Government in Prussia by referendum. This criminally mistaken manoeuvre was undertaken not on the initiative of the German Communist Party but on the advice of Moscow. Later in the year a section of

the Social Democratic Party voiced its desire for a united front with the Communists. But Thaelmann, the leader of the Communist Party scornfully warned the workers against this "new demagogic manoeuvre" of the Social Fascists. Thus, instead of helping the Social Democratic workers to find their way to the Communists through experience, the Communist Party helped the Social Democratic leaders to avoid the question of a united front and to maintain their demoralising influence over the workers.

Towards the end of 1931 it was clear that the Comintern had resigned itself to the victory of Hitler in Germany. The whole line of propaganda was aimed at showing that the present "Social Fascist" government or Hitler's Fascist Government made little difference to the workers. In other words, the Comintern was preparing to hand over the power to Hitler without a struggle. Incredible though this may appear, this was so, and this was precisely what eventually happened. In October 1931, Rommele, one of the three leaders of the Communists, declared in the Reichstag "Once they (the Fascists) are in power then the united front of the proletariat will be established and it will make a clean sweep of everything.....We are not afraid of these Fascist gentlemen. They will sheet their bolt quicker than any other Government". This criminal policy had its source, as we shall see, in the foreign policy considerations of the

Soviet bureaucrats. At the same time it is likely that the leaders in the Kremlin with their lack of vision and bureaucratic stupidity realised no more than the bureaucrats of the Social Democracy what precisely the victory of Fascism would mean.

Not that they had had no warnings. In November 1931 Trotsky wrote from Prinkipo, "The coming into power of the German 'National Socialists' would mean above all the extermination of the flower of the German proletariat, the disruption of its organisations, the extirpation of its belief in itself and its future.....Retreat, you say, you who were yesterday the prophets of the 'third period'? Leaders and institutions can retreat, individual persons can hide. But the working class will have no place to retreat in the face of Fascism, and no place where to hide.....Ten proletarian insurrections, ten defeats one on top of the other, could not debilitate the German working class as much as a retreat before Fascism would weaken it at the given moment. (Germany—the Key to the International Situation). In January 1932 Trotsky again wrote making an acute Marxist analysis of the situation in his book "What Next" and appealed to the members of the Communist Party of Germany to force their leaders to enter into a united front with the Social Democrats.

But the numerically weak Left Opposition, pitted against

the powerful bureaucracies of the Social Democratic and Communist Parties who alike opposed the united front, could not get their policy accepted. They were branded by the Comintern as "Counter-revolutionaries". In the 'Communist International' of March 15th 1932, Piatnitzky the Secretary of the Communist International wrote, "The Social Democrats too sometimes put forward the slogan of unity. And in this the renegade Trotsky hastens to their aid with his proposal for a 'bloc' between the Communists and the Social Democrats".

CAPITULATION AND DEFEAT:

By the middle of 1932 the economic crisis intensified. Production fell, wages decreased and the number of unemployed rose nearly seven million. In July the Social Democratic Government was dissolved. No protest took place. In the elections at the end of July, the Nazis polled 13 million votes, the Social Democrats 7 million, and the Communists 5 million. The centre parties had by now practically disappeared. Roughly speaking, the workers had instinctively moved to the Left, and thanks to the disunity of the workers, the petty bourgeoisie to the Right. Votes, however, are not the deciding factor, and still the relationship of forces could have been decisively changed. But in the face of the disunity of the workers the aggressiveness of the Fascists increased.

In September 1932 theses adopted by the 15th Plenum of

the E. C. C. I., declared, "Only by directing the main blows against Social Democracy, this social mainstay of the bourgeoisie—will it be possible to strike at and defeat the chief class enemy of the proletariat--the bourgeoisie." Piatnitzky said in his speech, "This united front must be directed against the Social Democrats and the trade union bureaucracy." *

At end of January 1933 Hitler was appointed Chancellor. In March Hitler burned the Reichstag. On April 1st the Presidium of the E. C. C. I. passed a resolution ratifying the policy of the German Party, which stated, "The revolutionary upsurge in Germany will inevitably grow inspite of the Fascist terror. The resistance of the masses to Fascism is bound to increase. The establishment of an open Fascist dictatorship, by destroying all the democratic illusions among the masses and liberating them from the influence of Social Democracy, accelerates the rate of Germany's development towards proletarian revolution." (The Present Situation in Germany, by O. Piatnitzky-Modern Books).

The Social Democratic leaders, true to type, now tried to enter service under Hitler. But on May 1st commenced Hitler's offensive. He spared no one, not even the 'Social Fascists'. Arrests, beatings, murders, confiscations of trade unions' funds, became the order of the day. These

* Published in English by Modern Books—Publishers.

was no resistance. The leaders who could, escaped. The remainder were rounded up by the Fascists and imprisoned or killed. Without leadership, a disorderly retreat of the masses began. The workers' organisations were systematically broken up and the flower of the German proletariat of Europe, with the largest mass organisations and Communist Party outside Russia, succumbed to Fascist reaction without a struggle. And the international working class movement suffered the biggest defeat in its history.

In December 1932, when there were only isolated groups of Communists left, as an echo from the past the Report of the 13th Plenum monotonously repeated, "Social Democracy continues to play the role of the main social prop of the bourgeoisie also in countries of open Fascist dictatorship." In Germany, continued the Plenum, "enormous revolutionary energy is being accumulated among the masses and a new revolutionary upsurge is already beginning." The Plenum again ratified the policy pursued in Germany as correct.

The Comintern leadership is never wrong. It shares with the Pope the mystic quality of infallibility. And it demands like His Holiness unquestioning and unthinking obedience. The theory of Social Fascism invented by Stalin in 1924, we recollect, was not officially discarded in the Rightist period of 1925-27. That is not Stalin's

way. It was merely set aside for future use. Revived again in the 'third period', we have witnessed the part it played in determining the destinies of the German proletariat. After 1933 it was put away again, unobtrusively, silently for there is nobody to question. Never refuted, the theory of Social Fascism remains to this day as part of the official doctrine of the Comintern. Perhaps Stalin hopes that one day again....

THE COMINTERN- AN INSTRUMENT OF SOVIET RUSSIAN FOREIGN POLICY

How can we explain the criminal blindness of the policy of the Comintern in regard to Germany? It is possible to understand this only if one has understood the nature of the transformation that had come over the Comintern in the preceding years from 1923 to 1928. In this period, we noted, the Comintern was converted from an organisation for World Revolution into a docile instrument of the bureaucracy of the Soviet State. Having liquidated the Left and Right Oppositions, the bureaucracy had the unfettered freedom with unparalleled callousness to use the Comintern as an instrument of its foreign policy.

The foreign policy of the Soviet Union, aimed at preventing military intervention, quite naturally saw in Franco-German antagonism in the post-war years a guarantee against intervention from the West. But the German Social Democracy, pursuing a policy of concilia-

tion towards Britain and France, appeared to be progressively bridging this gap. This made the German Social Democracy the bitter enemy of the Soviet bureaucracy. The exigencies of the struggle against the Opposition had prevented this antagonism from attaining its proper expression till 1928. But even as early as 1927 we find that in Germany the Left leaders of the Social Democrats had been declared to be the chief enemy.

The growth of the party of Hitler, on the other hand, meant that the gap between Germany and France would widen. The precise meaning of the coming to power of Hitler for all organisations of the working class including the Communist Party itself, the Stalinist bureaucracy, as we remarked earlier, were in all probability incapable of perceiving. Rommele had said, "We are not afraid of these Fascist gentlemen..." To the unimaginative bureaucrats the government of Bruning had already a Fascist character. A government of Hitler would be but another Fascist government, only more Fascist perhaps. And Hitler unlike the Social Democrats, was the sworn enemy of France. And thus, the Social Democrats, the chief enemy of the Soviet bureaucracy, became also the chief enemy of the German workers. The cause of proletarian revolution in Germany was sacrificed, apparently for the peaceful construction of Socialism in Russia, but actually to perpetuate the regime of the bureaucracy. For the question of Socialism in Russia

will be decided not within its national boundaries but in the wider arena of the international revolution.

Viewed in the light cast upon events by the unravelling of Soviet Russian foreign policy in this period, the whole policy of the Comintern in Germany takes on a lurid colour. Not only the direction of the main attack against the Social Democrats, but also the adaptation to nationalist agitation in the attack on the Treaty of Versailles, the support of the Fascist referendum in Prussia, the systematic lulling of the workers into a false sense of security as regards the Fascist danger, and finally the cowardly surrender without a struggle of all the positions to Fascism hitherto inexplicable acquire meaning and intelligibility in their new relations. Soviet Russian foreign policy is, of course, perfectly justified in exploiting differences and cleavages between different imperialist camps to its own advantage. But to betray the interests of proletarian revolution for the sake of day-to-day considerations of foreign policy is an unpardonable crime.

The defeat of the German proletariat in 1933 marked the end of the period in which the Left Opposition functioned as an Opposition group attempting to reform the 3rd International. The German Catastrophe demonstrated in glaring fashion the extent of the degeneration of the Comintern and the impossibility of effecting its

reform. From a subjective factor for world revolution it had transformed itself into an objective obstacle to it. Thus arose inexorably the need for building a new International. The Left Opposition took the initiative in calling for the organisation of new Communist Parties and of a new, Communist, Fourth International.

Chapter Eight

THE TOLL OF THE POPULAR FRONT. SOVIET FOREIGN POLICY AND THE 7TH CONGRESS:

The victory of Hitler in Germany led to a decisive change in the orientation of the foreign policy of the Soviet Union. Hitherto, in the West, it had been Anglo-French intervention that Stalin had feared. With the advent of Hitler to power and the resulting threat to Anglo-French imperialism, this particular danger receded at least temporarily, into the background. But in its place there arose the more formidable and more imminent danger of German intervention itself. The fulminations of Hitler against Communism and his open threats against the Soviet Union only emphasised the danger.

What counter measures did Stalin take? In September, 1934 Russia joined the League of Nations. In May 1935 the Franco-Soviet Pact—a military alliance was signed, in which each party promised to come to the aid of the other in the event of German aggression. In the same month Stalin declared to the French premier Laval that 'he understood and approved completely the policy of

National Defence of France". Though constituting a temporary check to Hitler, the Franco-Soviet Pact was of little value since the military intervention of France against Germany was subject to the approval of Great Britain. Stalin therefore aimed at an Anglo-Franco-Soviet pact to achieve his purpose. The formation of the Rome-Berlin Axis in 1936 and of the Anti-Comintern Pact of Germany, Italy and Japan soon after, made Stalin redouble his efforts to secure an alliance of the "democratic" countries with Russia against the fascist countries.

No one can question the right of the Soviet Union to take advantage of divisions among the imperialist nations and to conclude even military pacts for the purpose of its own defence. But it is shortsighted folly to imagine that pacts with capitalist governments can serve as a reliable basis for securing the defence of the Soviet Union. It is sheer chicanery to deceive the workers of the world into believing that the class character and policies of a capitalist state alters one whit by the fact that its government is prepared for its own imperialist purposes, to make an alliance with the Soviet Union. And above all it is base treachery to subordinate the needs of the international movement to the interests of Soviet foreign policy. But this is precisely what the degenerated Comintern did, in callous and blatant fashion, in the decade that has followed the victory of fascism in

Germany. Having long since abandoned faith in world revolution, the Soviet bureaucrats saw in the Comintern only an instrument for securing support for their foreign policies, and did not hesitate to use it to 'placate' the bourgeoisie of the "democratic" countries.

The Seventh World Congress of the 3rd International, meeting in August 1935 after a lapse of seven years, officially set the party on the new line. The world was divided into peace-loving democratic capitalisms like Britain, France, and Czechoslovakia (with whom Russia desired alliance), and war-loving capitalisms like Germany and Japan (who constituted a war threat to Russia). The victory of Socialism in the Soviet Union was declared to have been finally and irrevocably achieved. But the most infamous of all was the new tactic of the Popular Front which was prescribed as the method of defeating fascism.

We have stated earlier that the rise of fascism is the inevitable consequence of the inability of the bourgeoisie to maintain its class rule through bourgeois parliamentarism in conditions of capitalist decline. In other words the growth of the fascist danger in a particular country means that bourgeois-democracy has become incompatible with the existence of bourgeois class rule. Henceforth in that country only one of two solutions is possible, either the proletarian revolution which overthrows the

class rule of the bourgeoisie and substitutes thereof the class rule of the proletariat, or the fascist reaction which gives another lease of life to capitalism. The former alternative demands the formation of a united front of the working class against fascism as the first step in the struggle for the overthrow of capitalism. This means in practice a united front of the revolutionary party with other working class parties (notably the Social Democrats).

The tactic of the united front consists in an agreement for joint action between different parties and organisations having different programmes. A correct application of this tactic demands that the revolutionary party does not give up its own programme for a common political programme with other parties; that it preserves its full independence and that it reserves the right to criticise its allies. Such a united front between the revolutionary party and other working class parties, coupled with a bold and resolute leadership that will not hesitate to break openly when necessary with the vacillating Social Democratic allies in order to carry the working class forward to the final assault, is the only way to defeat fascism. In Germany, basing itself on Soviet Union foreign policy considerations, the Comintern rejected the path of a united front of the working class parties and condemned the German working class to the penal servitude of fascism. Now, corresponding to the demand of Soviet foreign policy, it advocated the policy of class

collaboration disguised under the specious term of Popular Front.

Fascism was declared to be the "open terrorist dictatorship not of finance capital, but only of 'the most reactionary, most chauvinistic and most imperialist elements of finance capital'." * From this was deduced the Popular Front policy of winning over the liberal bourgeois elements. The means proposed to defeat fascism was therefore not an alliance with the Social Democrats, but an alliance, not only with the Social Democrats, but also with their masters, the liberal bourgeoisie. Not united action of the working class for carrying the class struggle forward to revolution, but abandonment of the proletarian programme in favour of a common political programme with the liberals to maintain tottering bourgeois democracy.

The 'obedient tools' saw what was required of them. The struggle for the overthrow of capitalism was replaced by the struggle to maintain bourgeois democracy, where necessary, against the proletarian vanguard. The tirades against the fascists of one's own country were extended to tirades against German Fascism. For, says Dimitrov "The most reactionary variety of Fascism is the German type of fascism... German fascism is acting as the spearhead of international counter-revolution, as

* From the main report by Dimitrov to the 7th World Congress of the 3rd International. See Dimitrov, 'United Front'.

the chief incendiary of imperialist war, as the initiator of a crusade against the Soviet Union." (*Ibid.*)

In country after country of the democracies, the Stalinists demanded, in exchange for their willingness to defend the fatherland, only one price from the bourgeoisie. That is, that the foreign policy of the particular country should not be directed against the Soviet Union. They were prepared to "suspend" the class struggle at home and transform themselves into the recruiting sergeants of the imperialists for the coming Imperialist World War. The Sixth World Congress of 1928 meeting after the expulsion of the Opposition, had signified the transformation of the Comintern from a revolutionary organisation into an instrument of the Soviet bureaucracy. Internationalism, however, continued to exist for it, if only as a facade. But even this facade had now become an obstruction in the path of the bureaucracy, and had therefore to be dispensed with. The Seventh World Congress accomplished this task and signified the break with the last remnants of Comintern traditions.

THE ROLE OF THE POLULAR FRONT IN FRANCE

The world economic depression which commenced in 1929 reached France late. It was from 1932 onwards that France began to feel the full effects of the crisis. And following the crisis there began to appear in France

precisely that process that had proceeded apace in Germany from 1929 onwards, and had ended in the victory of Hitler. Fascism began to rear its head. Slowly, but none the less surely, the nation commenced to divide into two camps, the masses beginning to move either to the Right—to the Fascists, or to the Left—to the Socialists and Communists.

On February 6, 1934, gangs of fascists staged an unsuccessful attack on the Chamber of Deputies in an attempt not merely to drive out the Radical Government Daladier that was in office at the time, but to break parliament altogether. The Stalinists, still following the ultra-leftist line of Social Fascism, at first supported the Fascist, demanding the arrest of Daladier for shooting the fascists (1), but were soon compelled by the situation itself to alter their course. On the 13th there occurred a vast general strike of protest by the workers called by the Socialists and Communists, which showed that the workers were alive to the danger. This constituted a set-back to the fascists. But the Communist Party soon turned back to the official line of Social Fascism. In the middle of the year a "united front" was indeed formed between the Socialists and Communists, but the proviso, that there should be no criticism by the two parties of each other was included in the terms, on the suggestion of the Communists! But after the Franco-Soviet Pact of September, a special drive was made to rope in the

Radicals too. By the middle of 1935, the Popular Front of the Communist, Socialist and Radical Socialist Parties had come into being.

The Radical Socialist Party was pre-eminently the party of the petty bourgeoisie, with a leadership completely subservient to the bourgeoisie. But it was the most profound mistake to suppose that by winning over the Radical leaders one could win over their petty bourgeois following. We have pointed out earlier that in the advanced countries fascism finds it necessary to utilise the petty bourgeoisie in order to come into power. The decomposition of the centre parties of the vacillating petty bourgeoisie of town and country is, consequently, generally the first sign of the advent of the fascist danger. So long as capitalism had been able to grant certain sops to the petty bourgeoisie, Radicalism in France had been able to maintain its hold over the petty bourgeois masses. But after the crisis it became clear that even such sops were now out of the question. The petty bourgeois masses began to cease to believe in the possibility of ordered progress under bourgeois democracy. It is precisely in these conditions that they fall an easy prey to fascism. In France the petty bourgeoisie, no longer satisfied with the democratic shibboleths of the Radicals, were increasingly looking elsewhere for a solution of their problems, and were beginning to turn to the fascist organisations, the Jeunesses Patriotes, the Croix-de-Feu, the Solidarité

Franaise, etc. The problem of winning the petty bourgeois masses to the side of the fight against fascism was none other than the problem of winning them *away* from the Radical Party. A bold and independent class policy on the part of the proletarian parties, secured on the basis of a united front, would certainly have broken away the bulk of the lower strata of the petty bourgeoisie from the historically exhausted Radical shell, and prepared the way for the next stage, the proletarian seizure of power. But the Popular Front with the Radicals, adopting the Radical programme of the defence of democracy, served only to bolster up artificially the disintegrating Radical Party, thanks to the prestige that association with the working class parties gave it. The Popular Front meant the utilisation of the on-coming mass wave only to re-inforce and to re-impose on the masses their democratic illusions, until such time as, cruelly deceived again, they would turn in desperation to the Fascists.

Determined to fight Fascism, the French workers, trusting in the Communist Party, increasingly joined its ranks, swelling its membership to 150,000 in the middle of 1936 (excluding 100,000 members of the Young Communist League). The elections in the middle of 1936 resulted in an overwhelming victory for the Popular Front. Immediately after the elections, there occurred in June a vast general strike throughout France, involving 6 million

workers and employees of all kinds. The workers gaining new confidence from the election results, but at the same time instinctively sensing that independent action on their part was necessary if only to "push on" their leaders, entered the factories and refused to come out till their demands were satisfied. In many factories the managers were imprisoned as hostages. The "stay in" strikes constituted a threat to the foundations of the bourgeois order, for they constituted a virtual occupation of the factories of the capitalists.

The situation was pregnant with tremendous possibilities. On the slogans of "Disarm the Fascists" and "Form Armed Workers' Defence Guards" the workers could themselves have disarmed the armed Fascist bands, and with the arms seized from them formed the first detachments of a regular workers' militia. From then on to the formation of Soviets would have been but a step. The Communist Party was in a position thus to carry forward the movement to revolution. All France knew its leaders, the party had a real following among the industrial workers, it had considerable influence in the trade unions, and in the developing situation an ever-increasing number of workers were looking to it for leadership. But far from carrying the movement forward, the C. P. of France was together with the Social Democrats, responsible for stemming the strike wave. Concerned no longer with revolution, but dreading it rather, together with the

Socialists they led the workers back to work in the interests of maintaining the Popular Front Government and the good relations of the Soviet Union with capitalist France.

The Popular Front Government of the Socialist premier Blum hastily passed bills through parliament, granting several concession to the workers, notably the 40 hour week, holidays with pay, and provisions for increased wages. Needless to add, with the inevitable ebb in the mass movement that followed in the course of time, these economic concessions were wrung back one by one by the capitalists, directly as well as in an indirect manner through the increased cost of living resulting from devaluation and other inflationary measures which the Government was forced by the pressure of the banks to carry out. The 40 hour week, the last of the gains, was abrogated in 1938.

Only the International Workers' Party (POI), the French section of the Fourth International, raised the slogan of soviets in the critical days of the general strike, and attempted to develop the movement towards the revolution. They were, of course, immediately subjected to the united attack of the Stalinists, Socialists and the bourgeoisie. Few in numbers, and unknown as yet to the majority of the workers, they were not in a position to influence the course of events.

The mass movement, though stemmed, was yet far from defeated. All eyes were soon centered on Spain, where the Spanish revolution had begun following on the armed revolt of the Fascists. The Spanish workers and peasants had the active sympathy of the overwhelming majority of the workers in France. The policy of non-intervention agreed on between the governments of France, Britain and the Soviet Union, where in it was agreed not to supply arms to either side in the Spanish civil war, incurred the greatest disfavour among the masses. Here again was an opportunity for the C. P. of France. If it had given the call, it was entirely possible for the French workers themselves to have transported arms across the frontier into Spain, in spite of the orders of the Government. So deep and widespread was feeling on Spain, that the Blum Government would not have dared to prevent it ; and in the alternative if it did, this would immediately have brought about an acute crisis in France. But the C. P. of France confined itself to holding meetings asking the Blum Government to "lift the embargo", and even this propaganda was carried on with an anxious eye on the Right Radicals, who continually threatened to secede from the Popular Front.

By the end of 1936 the Communists came forward with their new proposal for widening the Popular Front still further into a "French Front", which in fact meant an

alliance of all sections (including the most reactionary bourgeois) against Germany.

The mass movement continued to ebb. The Right began to gain at the expense of the Left. The disappointed petty bourgeois elements began to turn to the Fascists ; workers disappointed in the Communists to the Socialists. In early 1937 Right Wing Radicals took important portfolios in the Blum Ministry. The shift to the Right continued, the Blum Ministry giving place to the Chautemps Ministry, and finally to the Daladier Ministry. The Popular Front was at an end. A huge armaments programme was set in motion, wages reduced and social services cut down, and the rights of meeting and press restricted. Daladier declared that attempts to enforce the 40 hour week in the munitions industry would be considered crimes against the state. The Communist Party supported the armaments programme and became the most active social patriots in France. Its leader Thorez openly joined the French army, a fact which was greeted with acclamation in the Communist press. The stage was being set for the advent of Fascism. If Fascism did not arrive, it was only because of the imminence of the imperialist war demanding "national unity", which unity was being freely secured by the bourgeoisie, thanks to the treachery of the Communists in particular.

THE POPULAR FRONT COMES TO SPAIN

The experience of Spain is reacn in lessons for the international proletariat. But there are two main lessons that stand out above all others. Firstly, Spain proved once again (as it had earlier been proved in Russia and China) that in the present era of declining capitalism, there can be no "peaceful" period of bourgeois-democratic development for backward countries. It proved that a backward country like Spain could accomplish its bourgeois democratic revolution only through the dictatorship of the proletariat, thus bearing out once again the correctness of Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution. In the second place, the tragic experience of Spain provided the final and conclusive prove of the impotence of the Popular Front as an instrument for defeating Fascism. It testified to the correctness of the analyses of the Left Opposition and the 4th International after it, which pointed out that the only way to defeat Fascism was by the united class action of the workers, leading to the overthrow of capitalist rule and the proletarian seizure of power.

Only one third of the land in Spain was owned by the peasants, the majority of whom performed day labour on the big estates to eke out an existance. The rapid growth of agricultural workers' unions and peasants' organisations since 1931 under the republic struck deep

at the interests of landed capitalism in Spain. The ascendancy of the workers' organisations created the same problem for the capitalists in the cities. The city capitalists and the landlords were closely bound to one another not only by family ties but also through mortgages. To solve the problems of the capitalists by dividing the land, creating a prosperous peasant proprietor class and thus expanding the internal market, was therefore out of the question. Nor could Spanish capitalism expand externally. On account of its belated development it found all these avenues closed to it by the great imperialist powers. Consequently, the Spanish bourgeoisie, in alliance with their partners the landlords, were compelled to turn Fascism with its destruction of all independent organisations of the workers, in order to solve their problems.

Ever since the flight of Alfonso in 1931 and the institution of the republican regime, the increasing sharpness of political relations and the widening chasm between Right and Left into which the nation was dividing, provided evidence that the republic could only be of short duration before it was swept away by one or other of the gathering class forces. All this, however, was perceived and foretold only by Trotsky and the Left Opposition. The 1934 rising of the Asturian miners on the one hand, and its brutal suppression accompanied by the imprisonment of thirty thousand workers and their

leaders on the other, were unmistakeable signs of the approaching storm.

The majority of workers in Spain followed the Anarchists (FAI—Anarchist Federation of Spain) with their trade union organisation, the CNT (National Confederation of Labour). They represented the school of Bakunin who broke away from the First International of Marx. A petty bourgeois deviation from Marxism, Anarchism had taken root in countries where capitalism had developed late and the working class was young, and reflected the ideology that the masses of ruined handicraftsmen thrown into the working class had brought with them into the workers' movement. The Anarchists were exceedingly militant in carrying on the day to day struggles of the workers, but they believed that the emancipation of the working class could be secured by universal strike action and the assumption of control by the workers in each factory. Opponents of government or coercion of any kind from above, they were opposed to the Marxian concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat, and declared "libertarian communism" to be their immediate aim. Purists in this field, they eschewed participation in elections or use of parliaments, declaring that these things had only a corrupting influence on the movement. When the theoretical edifices of Anarchism crumbled one by one in face of the hard realities of the revolutionary struggle in Spain, the

Anarchists, for all their revolutionary phrases, were shown up as contemptible compromisers in practice, in no way superior to their social democratic rivals.

The Socialist Party also had a large following, with its trade union organisation the UGT (General Workers Union). However, even the leader of the left socialists Largo Caballero, though he grumbled and complained, followed the path of coalition with the bourgeoisie, till he was swept away by the reaction he himself had permitted to grow. The POUM (Workers Party of Marxist Unity), though a comparatively small party, had a splendid opportunity of leading the Spanish revolution. But its centrist and vacillating policy precluded it from doing so, although this did not save it, together with the Trotskyists and Left Anarchists, from bearing the full brunt of the Stalinist-bourgeois terror long before the victory of the Fascists. At first opposed to coalition with the bourgeoisie, the POUM suddenly supported the Popular Front in the elections of February 1936. It renounced the coalition after the elections, but called for an authentic Popular Front Government on the eve of the Fascist uprising (July, 17th). And it entered the Catalan Coalition Government in September, supporting by that action all the reactionary acts perpetrated by the government. The small group of Bolshevik-Leninists alone showed a recognition of what the situation demanded of a revolutionary party. But although they made not

inconsiderable gains, particularly from among the ranks of the CNT under whose banner the more important sections of the proletariat were gathered, none the less, time is required before the working class can be weaned away from its traditional organisations. But before this could happen reaction had regained its grip while disillusionment and despair had set in among the workers.

The Popular Front in Spain was composed of a bloc of the Socialist and Communist Parties with the liberal bourgeois Republicans, the Catalan Left of Companies and the Basque Nationalists, with the tacit support of the Anarchists, who voted for the Popular Front candidates in the elections of February 16, 1936. These elections resulted in the defeat of the Fascists and a victory for the Popular Front, and a government of the Republican Azana was formed. However, as happened in France four months later, the masses did not wait for the Popular Front Government to fulfil its promises, but went on strike in a vast wave spreading throughout the country. Political prisoners were released by tearing open the jails, and those dismissed after the 1934 revolt were forcibly reinstated in employment by the workers.

The Azana Government did nothing except legalise the measures already carried out by the masses. It did nothing to solve the land problem. It showed no signs of giving up imperialist aims in Spanish Morocco (the

only means by which it could have cut the ground under the feet of the Fascist general commanding the Moroccan troops). It did not even make a serious attempt to purge the army of its Fascist officers. As a matter of fact, the Azana Government was aware of the preparations for the impending coup d'état of the Fascists, but only suppressed the news and lulled the masses into a false sense of security. It is not surprising, therefore, that when the army revolted under the leadership of General Franco on July 17th, 1936, the Government not only suppressed the news at the start and made no effort at resistance, but even attempted to come to a compromise with the Fascist generals. The Socialist and Communist Parties declared their confidence in the Government. In a joint manifesto of July 18th, they stated "The Government commands and the Popular Front obeys". If matters had been left to the Government or these worker-allies of the bourgeoisie, the Fascist revolt would surely have succeeded in the very first days. Fortunately, the Spanish proletariat acted.

THE SPANISH REVOLUTION BEGINS

On July 19th the Barcelona proletariat, seizing what arms they could find, stormed the garrisons and prevented the capitulation of the republic to the fascists. Soon all Catalonia, industrially the most highly developed province in Spain, was in their hands. The Madrid proletariat saved Madrid. It was the same in Valencia

and Malaga. The workers rose spontaneously to action. Franco's revolt acted as a spur and enabled the workers to overcome the limitations imposed on them by leaders who had entirely failed to read the signs of the times. The army was almost entirely with the Fascists. The Popular Front Government had practically no armed forces behind them. A new army was required, and the workers' organisations built their militias, equipped them and sent them to the front. Workers police and militiamen took over police functions. Sailors shot their officers, elected sailors' committees, took over the Loyalist fleet and established contact with workers' committees. The Spanish Revolution had begun!

This process went furthest in Catalonia, where within a week practically all transport and industry was in the hands of workers' committees, predominantly of the CNT. Here, a period of dual power ensued. Of the numerous committees that sprang up the most important organ of power was the "Central Committee of Anti-Fascist Militias of Catalonia", the decrees of which were the only law in Catalonia. In the villages, the peasants seized the land, in many areas forming collectives. The Militias of the "Central Committee" conquered the province of Aragon as an army of social liberation, expropriating the landlords and organising production generally on a collective basis.

The big bourgeoisie were behind Franco from the start.

The Republican leaders, representing the bourgeois liberal and professional elements, whose income and position are based on the institutions of bourgeois democracy, had already demonstrated their impotence at the commencement of the fascist revolt. The masses, on the other hand, had shown the way to defeat Fascism. It was precisely where revolutionary means had been adopted that the first important victories had been scored. For the defeat of Fascism it was essential that the fighters in the army should realise that they were fighting for their full social liberation and not for the re-establishment of the old "democratic" forms of exploitation. The workers and peasants in the rear of both armies should be made to realise this. In other words, the fight against fascism could attain victory only as proletarian revolution, giving the land to the peasants and the factories to the workers and leading to the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

The first and most vitally necessary step on this path was to create soviets. The existing organs of workers' power were scattered in numerous militia and factory committees. The membership of these committees, moreover, was based not on election but on mutual agreement between the various parties. Revolution to go forward needs constantly to draw fresh strength from the masses. For this, a centralised organ of struggle and power is needed, freely elected by the workers (and

soldiers), in which the various working class parties can freely contend for leadership of the masses. This need could only be supplied by soviets. The POUM rejected this course. So did the Anarchists, who controlled the already existing committees. Their theories prevented them from using their predominant position in the working class movement to build up the organs of the future workers' state, but did not prevent them from co-operating with the bourgeois state. In other words, in a crisis the Anarchists proved that they were prepared to abandon their false theories in favour not of the proletariat but of the bourgeoisie.

In a situation where a revolutionary upsurge has released powerful mass forces, the reaction finds it necessary to advance at first under cover of parties in which the masses still have faith. In Spain this cover was provided principally by the Communists, socialists and Anarchists. And of these the Communists were indubitably the most active and conscious agency of the reaction. They stood for subservience to the bourgeoisie not only for the period of the war but afterwards as well. Their paper 'Mundo Obrero' declared "It is absolutely false that the present workers' movement has for its object the establishment of a proletarian dictatorship after the war has been terminated. It cannot be said we have a social motive for our participation in the war. We communists are the first to repudiate this supposition. We are

motivated exclusively by a desire to defend the democratic republic" (August 6, 1936). A comparatively small and insignificant party till 1936, due principally to their ultra-leftist policies in the past, the Stalinists expanded swiftly after the Franco revolt. The expansion in their membership, however, was largely from petty bourgeois elements, and their influence derived principally from the fact that Russia supplied the Spanish Government with arms. The proposal of the C. P. of Spain were always linked with threats that Stalin would stop supplies. When the POUM called for granting Trotsky asylum in Spain, the Soviet Consul General declared to the press "if Trotsky were permitted to enter Catalonia, the Soviet Government would cut off all aid to Spain!" (La Prensa report—see Morrow, "Revolution and Counter Revolution in Spain").

In September 1936 was formed the Coalition Government led by the Socialist leader Caballero, consisting of Socialist, Communist and Republican ministers, and joined in November by the Anarchists. This Government proved little better than that of Azana. On the pressing land question it merely sanctioned division of estates belonging to known Fascists. The bourgeois state gradually came back into its own. Decrees were passed dissolving the revolutionary committees of the July days. Several papers of the POUM and CNT were suppressed. The Government Assault Guards were prohibited from taking

any part in politics. The regular police took back its functions from the worker patrols. The workers were disarmed step by step while the rebuilt police forces were re-armed with Russian material. A centralised army on the bourgeois model gradually took the place of the militias. The persecution of Trotskyists, POUM and Left Anarchists commenced.

Even in the sphere of military operations the Popular Front displayed its inefficiency and impotence. In the early stages of the war the seizure of Algeciras, the principal landing point of Franco's Moors and legionnaires from Spanish North Africa, could easily have been accomplished by the Loyalist navy. But the Government made no attempt to do so. It failed to organise Bilbao and the industrial areas of the North for the production of munitions. This area could have become the chief centre of Spain's munition supplies. The Aragon Front provided a strategic point from which to strike a crippling blow at Franco's forces. But this front was starved of arms because it was manned by POUM and Anarchist militias. Clearly, the Popular Front Government feared revolution more than Franco.

THE SABOTAGE OF THE REVOLUTION

The advance of the counter-revolution alarmed the masses. On May 3rd, 1937, Assault Guards of the

Government in Barcelona under the command of a Stalinist, seized the Central Telephone Exchange which the CNT had captured and controlled since July 15th. The workers' guards on the spot were forcibly disarmed. This action was the last straw to the exasperated workers, and led to the second uprising of the Barcelona proletariat. The barricades went up. The Barcelona proletariat rushed to the defence of the CNT-FAI and POUM headquarters. Armed workers in Tarragona and Gerona came out in the same way. The masses of Catalonia were ranged overwhelmingly under the banner of the CNT. This was a splendid opportunity to retrieve the lost positions and to go forward. The Fourth Internationalists as well as the Friends of Durruti and the Libertarian Youth, from among the Anarchists put forward the slogan of soviets. But the CNT and POUM leaders gave no lead. Instead, they persuaded the masses to leave the barricades. The result was calamitous. The government lost no time in disarming the workers, and brutal reprisals followed the shameful capitulation.

The Anarchists and Socialists have sought to justify their capitulation in Spain by putting forward the plea that concessions were necessary in order to obtain arms from the Soviet Union. But not only were the Russian supplies meagre, in proportion to the issues at stake in Spain, but there could have been no excuse for yielding

to such pressure. In the words of Trotsky, "If the leaders of the Anarchists had resembled revolutionists at all, they would have answered the first blackmail from Moscow not only by continuing the socialist advance but by disclosing Stalin's counter-revolutionary conditions before the working class of the world. Thus they would have forced the Moscow bureaucracy to choose openly between socialist revolution and the dictatorship of Franco..... And what if Moscow, in the absence of People's Front, should in general refuse to give arms? And what, we answer to this, if the Soviet Union in general did not exist in the world? Revolutions have been victorious up to this time not at all thanks to great foreign patrons who supplied them with arms. Usually the counter-revolution enjoyed foreign patronage..... If at the head of the armed workers and peasants, i.e., at the head of the so-called "republican" Spain there were revolutionists and not cowardly agents of the bourgeoisie, the problem of arming would in general not have played a paramount role. The army of Franco including the colonial Riffs and the soldiers of Mussolini are not at all immune to revolutionary contagion. Surrounded from all sides by the fire of the socialist uprising, the soldiers of Facism would have proved to be an insignificant quantity. Not arms and not military "geniuses" were lacking in Madrid and Barcelona; what was lacking was a revolutionary party!" (Conditions for Victory in Spain", FIGHT, June, 1938).

Up to the May events, the reaction had developed under cover of Socialist and Anarchist collaboration. But the scene was now set for an acute swing to the Right under the aegis of a Communist-Republican bloc. The Socialist Caballero's aim had been the impossible one of a bourgeois-democratic republic victorious over Franco—of course, together with some kind of workers' control of production co-existing with private property. To the Stalinists, however, the struggle for preserving bourgeois democracy was itself subordinate to the needs of Soviet Union foreign policy, namely, that of keeping the goodwill of the French and British imperialists. Thus their aim in Spain was to accept the dictates of Anglo-French imperialism which demanded a stabilised bourgeois regime based on the participation not only of the liberal bourgeoisie, but also of the big bourgeois and landlord forces behind Franco! With this end in view the Stalinists placed themselves openly on the side of the reactionary forces in the Republican camp, pursued a conciliationist policy towards Fascists in an attempt to 'win them over', and became the most ruthless exterminators of the revolution.

The Negrín Cabinet, succeeding that of Caballero, signified the formation of the bourgeois-Stalinist bloc. Reaction now got under way with a vengeance. Fascists imprisoned by the popular tribunals were released in increasing numbers, while on the other hand criticism of

the government was made treason. The denouncing of priests or of citizens as fascists or anti-revolutionaries "unreasonably" or "without sufficient foundation" was made a penal offence, although the Stalinists freely continued to slander the POUM as Fascist. Under a Stalinist police head the police force was purged of all worker elements. Under the Stalinist Minister of Agriculture, Uribe, the peasant collectives, which were fairly widespread, were dissolved with the aid of Assault Guards and the land given back to the landlords and kulaks. In Aragon this was accomplished only after a campaign of ruthless suppression by military forces led by General Pozas, a member of the Communist Party. Under pretext of the needs of defence, the management of factories was taken over one by one by the Government and workers' control ended.

The POUM was suppressed. Its entire executive including its leader Nin were arrested and jailed. Nin himself was removed to a Stalinist controlled prison where he was foully murdered by the Stalinists without any kind of trial whatsoever. The hounding and persecution of all revolutionaries including large numbers of CNT militants became a feature of the Stalinist—bourgeois regime. The Spanish workers had risen twice with arms in their hands, first to make the revolution and then to defend it. But their leadership had cruelly betrayed them. Now disheartened, disillusioned, apathetic, they watched their

conquests being wiped away one by one.

Ten years before, in China, the Stalinist had betrayed the revolution. In Spain, however, they directly assumed the role of its executioners. The entire proletarian revolutionary vanguard was liquidated by them long before this could be done by Franco. Thus the Stalinists, by their criminal policy, not only paved the way for the victory of Fascism, but executed in advance goodly share of its labour.

The purely military struggle against Franco dragged on to its now inevitable conclusion. Town after town fell to the Fascists, generally without resistance, the Government commanders withdrawing without a struggle. The masses were not even given the opportunity to die fighting, but were left to be massacred by Franco's execution squads. In 1938 Barcelona, the last stronghold, fell without a struggle, ringing down the last curtain on the tragedy of Spain.

"The crushing of Barcelona deals a terrible blow to the world proletariat, but also teaches a great lesson. The mechanics of the Spanish "People's Front" as an organised system of deceit and treachery of the exploited masses has been completely exposed. The slogan of "defence of democracy" has once again revealed its reactionary essence, and at the same time, hollowness.

The bourgeoisie wants to perpetuate its rule of exploitation. The workers want to free themselves from exploitation. These are the real tasks of **FUNDAMENTAL** classes in modern society.

"Miserable cliques of petty bourgeois middlemen, having lost the confidence and the subsidies of the bourgeoisie, sought to salvage the past without giving any concessions to the coming day. Under the label of the "People's Front" they set up a joint stock company. Under the leadership of Stalin they have assured the most terrible defeat when all the conditions for victory were at hand.

"The Spanish proletariat gave proof of extraordinary capacity for initiative and revolutionary heroism. The revolution was brought to ruin by petty, despicable and utterly corrupted "leaders". The downfall of Barcelona signifies above all the downfall of the Second and Third Internationals, as well as of Anarchism, rotten to its core. Forward to a new road, workers! Forward to the road of the international Socialist revolution!" (Trotsky, "The Tragedy of Spain").

NATIONAL FRONT IN THE COLONIAL COUNTRIES

We noted earlier that the Communists and militant workers fleeing from the Kuomintang terror went into the peasant areas, where they were able to form a Red

Army by gathering round themselves the revolting peasants. In 1931 the creation of the "Chinese Socialist Republic" was proclaimed. This consisted of six widely separated areas spread across Central China, with constantly fluctuating boundaries. The only stable area held from 1930-34, was the "Central Soviet District" with a population of 3 millions. For more than five years the Reds defeated five successive Kuomintang campaigns against them, a feat made possible against forces several times superior in armaments, principally because of the support they received from the population and the disintegration their propaganda caused among the Kuomintang soldiers.

None the less, a peasant war however heroic and sustained it may be, cannot succeed on its own. The C. P. of China had completely abandoned its tasks in the cities. The Trotskyists who were functioning as the Left Opposition of the party strove in vain to get the party to lead the workers in struggles for partial demands in the cities and to put forward a programme of democratic demands which would provide a starting point for rallying the dispersed and demoralised city workers. For, revival of the workers' movement alone could provide the peasant revolt with the leadership that was indispensable for its success. In 1934 the Chinese Red Army was finally compelled to abandon Central China and to march into the North West, still

farther away from the political and economic centres of the country.

After the 7th Congress of the Comintern in 1935, the Moscow bureaucrats, fearing Japanese invasion of the U. S. S. R. and desiring to swing the Chinese bourgeoisie into an anti-Japanese position, reversed its instructions to the Communist Party of China. In 1936 Mao Tse Dung publicly offered the "hand of friendship to Chiang" if he would fight Japan. A new national united front, called the "anti-imperialist united people's front" now became the goal. The bloc between the Chinese C. P. and the Kuomintang was made in 1937. The Kuomintang terms were (1) Abolition of the Red Army, and its incorporation into the Government armies under the direct control of the Military Affairs Commission. (2) Dissolution of the "Soviet Republic". (3) Cessation of all Communist propaganda. (4) Suspension of the class struggle. To all these terms the Communists formally acceded, protesting at the same time that they had in fact already carried out the most important of them. And thus, by completing a full historical cycle the Communists had returned again to the "national united front", only on an infinitely lower and more shameful level. Today the Communists have openly renounced their radical agrarian programme, and make even no pretence of attempting to establish the "hegemony of the proletariat" in the anti-imperialist struggle. For, neither the

proletariat nor national liberation enter into their calculations, but only the immediate interests of their bureaucrat-masters in the Kremlin.

Today Chiang Kai Shek is conducting the war against Japanese imperialism purely as a military struggle, placing his faith not in the support of the masses, but in that of Anglo-American Imperialism. He is openly steering a course towards becoming the agent of the Anglo-American imperialists and towards the subordination of the national-liberationist aims of the war against Japan to the reactionary war aims of Anglo-American finance capital—thus bearing out the correctness of the Trotskyist analysis that the bourgeoisie of the colonial and semi-colonial countries is incapable of leading a genuine struggle against imperialism, and that even where it does enter into a military struggle against one imperialism it is only in order to wage it as the agent of another imperialism.

In India too, the change from ultra-leftism to a policy of capitulation to the bourgeoisie was commenced in 1936. The Communist Party of India adopted the policy of "National Front", counterpart of the Popular Front in the West. The Congress, yesterday the party of the counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie, was suddenly credited with a revolutionary role. Communists donned khaddar and became loyal Congressmen, even preaching Ahimsa and propagating the Gandhist "constructive programme" of charka and humanitarian rural uplift. They blunted the

growing class consciousness of the workers and deceived the petty bourgeois intelligentsia moving to the left with a diluted and distorted species of Marxism.

The Communist Party of India has proved itself to be as abject an instrument of the foreign policy of the Soviet bureaucracy as any other section of the Comintern, with local bureaucrats as cynical and dishonest as anywhere else. The Russo-German Pact in 1939 enabled them without difficulty to characterise the war that British Imperialism was waging at that time as an imperialist war. But Hitler's attack on the Soviet Union in June 1941 made them turn a complete somersault in December of the same year, when, according to them, the whole war became transformed into a people's war against fascism. Since then, they have been openly advocating support of the imperialist war, calling on workers to speed up production in the interests of the war effort, embarking on the most shameful racial attacks on the Japanese, opposing the mass struggle against British Imperialism that commenced in August 1942, attempting to divert and disrupt the movement by advancing the deceitful slogans of "Release the Leaders", "Congress-League Unity" and "National Government" (under imperialism), and forming their National Front with the openly reactionary bourgeoisie and the most reactionary elements in Indian society—the feudal princes and the landlords.

The Fourth International movement in India is still'

young. The Bolshevik-Leninist Party of India was formed only at the end of 1941. It is opposing the imperialist war and supporting the mass struggle against imperialism, but without confounding its organisation or programme with the Congress of the bourgeoisie. Its work is steadily progressing despite the intense repression. There is every prospect of its expanding rapidly in the fire of the struggle. For, unlike in China, Germany and Spain, the Stalinists have not had the opportunity of leading the working class to any major defeat. The Indian working class, young and vigorous, has suffered no serious disaster to demoralise it and sap its faith in itself and its future. In this fact lies real hope for the future.

THE COMINTERN AND THE IMPERIALIST WAR

The first organisational attempt of the Communist Party of Great Britain to introduce the Popular Front in Great Britain was the "Unity Campaign" of the Communist Party, the Socialist League and the Independent Labour Party, commenced at the end of 1936 with the ostensible aim of bringing about unity in the Labour Party and of pushing that organisation left. But the Labour Party leaders were able easily to disrupt the campaign which fizzled out after a few months. This was possible principally because the campaign was not one for raising support for a series of class demands as

a basis of struggle but a thinly veiled manoeuvre of the Communists for obtaining support for an Anglo-Soviet Pact. In 1937 the Popular Front idea was openly extended by the Communists to the international plane. The British workers were told that not only Mosley but Hitler was their enemy. The agitation for a "Peace Alliance" of the Soviet Union with the democratic imperialisms against Germany, commenced. The Communists declared their preparedness to take in Liberals into their "anti-Fascist front". After the Munich Pact, of September 1938 the main agitation of the C. P. of Great Britain was centered round the demand for the "Peace Alliance" against Hitler. Their opposition now was only to the "Pro-Nazi" Chamberlain, and they even declared their willingness to support a government led by Churchill.

It was perhaps the Communist Party of the U. S. A., however, that outdid all other sections of the Comintern in the manner it grovelled before its own bourgeoisie in the attempt to win them over to a pact with the Soviet Union. It became the most jingoist of jingos and the staunch defender of the American Constitution. Earl Browder, leader of the American Communist Party, declared "America has seen the Communist Party as the most consistent fighter for democracy, for the enforcement of the democratic provisions of our Constitution, for the defence of our flag, and the revival of its glorious revolutionary tradition. America has seen that

Communism is twentieth-century Americanism" (Daily Worker, New York, Nov. 3, 1936). But not satisfied with promising all support to American imperialism if it sided with the Soviet Union against Germany, the shameless Browder publicly declared before the senatorial investigating committee that in the event of a war between the U. S. A. and the Soviet Union, he and his party would be on the side of their own democratic fatherland! Such is the mental baseness induced by the foul disease of Stalinism.

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Suddenly, and without any warning to the Popular Fronters, Stalin made a 'volte face' in his foreign policy, and signed a pact with Hitler on August 20, 1939. On September 3rd began the war against Hitler, but without the Soviet Union. The Russo-German Non-Aggression Pact came as a bolt from the blue to Stalin's agents abroad. They failed to realise what it meant. The Stalinist bureaucrats in Britain and France, their intellects dulled through a long period of slavishly carrying out orders, were unable to see what was required of them. For a month, the Communist Parties of Britain and France still following the line of popular front days, supported the war as one of democracy against fascism. Perhaps Stalin, fuming in the Kremlin at their dull-wittedness, remembered even now Lenin's warning in 1921 to Bukarin and Zinoviev that if they demanded nothing but approbation in the

International they would surround themselves exclusively with "obedient fools"! The leader of the British C. P., Harry Pollitt, in his enthusiasm even published a booklet entitled "How to Win the War", a feat which, in the Soviet Union, would have qualified him for a G. P. U. prison.

However, before long the obedient if foolish agents of Stalin in Britain and France were acquainted of the error of their ways and forthwith changed the party line. The war against fascism transformed itself without difficulty into an imperialist war, in the interests of Soviet foreign policy. The responsibility for the war was placed on Britain and France, and the demand was put forward that peace be made with Hitler on the basis of the Russo-German terms. And thus the Comintern demonstrated in open and unashamed fashion that it was nothing but an instrument in the hands of the Soviet bureaucrats to be used for the purposes of their foreign policy. And in the meantime, it had done the war propaganda of the Anglo-French imperialists much more effectively than those gentlemen could ever have done it themselves, and thus helped the imperialists to drag the workers of Britain and France into the war.

The Russo-German Pact was not merely one of non-aggression, but one in which Stalin promised to supply Hitler with raw materials needed by Germany. The Soviet attitude towards Germany at war was one of

benevolent neutrality, if not of active sympathy. The Comintern policy in Germany accordingly underwent a change. At the 7th Congress Dimitrov had called fascism the dictatorship of the most reactionary elements of finance capital, and German Fascism the most reactionary variety of Fascism. Now, British finance capital became the most reactionary in the world. Walter Ulbricht, since 1935 the leader of the General Executive Committee of C. P. of Germany, writing in the official German Communist paper "Die Welt", stated "The German Government declares itself willing to take up friendly relations with the Soviet Union, whereas the Anglo-French militarist bloc desire a war against the Socialist Soviet Union. The Soviet people and the German working class have therefore an interest in checking the war plans of the British.... This war policy is all the more criminal since the Power which 'according to Hilferding' is to determine the future fate of Germany at the out-come of the war is *the most reactionary Power in the world*. British Imperialism displays its completely reactionary nature anew by turning down the proposal for a termination of the war which—Germany has made with the support of the Soviet Union".

Ulbricht goes on, "The workers of Germany are fighting heroically against the oppression and exploitation of the working class by the present regime in Germany because such terroristic rule injures the German people and

discredits Germany in the eyes of the world, and because it thereby weakens the resistance of the German people, and enables reactionary forces in England and France to use chauvinist arguments to mask their true war aims". That is to say, the German Communist "opposed" the Hitler regime in the period of the Russo-German Pact in much the same way that the Indian Communists today "oppose" imperialist repression in India—because "such terroristic rule" "weakens the resistance" of the Indian people to the Japanese in the war against Japan. In other words, in this period of Soviet-German collaboration, the C. P. of Germany tacitly supported their own bourgeoisie in the imperialist war. The arch enemy of the Communists was no longer the Hitler regime but the opponents of the Russo-German Pact.

* * *

No one was surprised when, after the treacherous German attack on the Soviet Union in June 1941, the Communist Parties in the democratic countries came out for unconditional support of the war. With the entry of the Soviet Union into the war, it became transformed overnight into a "People's War" against Fascism, deserving of the support of the proletariat of all countries. Revolutionists opposing the war as imperialist are today branded as "fifth columnists" and agents of Tokyo or Berlin. The agents of the counter-revolutionary Comintern, after a temporary lapse, have again become the staunchest defenders of bourgeois democracy. They

are using the sympathy of the masses for the Soviet Union in order to win support for the democratic imperialisms. It little matters to these cynical betrayers that in October 1917 the Russian workers made their proletarian revolution by overthrowing the "democratic" government of Kerensky, which together with the democracies of England, France and America were then fighting another "war for democracy" against the autocratic monarchy of the German Kaiser. In the words of Trotsky, "The memory of the first victorious uprising of the proletariat against bourgeois democracy serves in the hands of the usurpers to save bourgeois democracy from the proletarian uprising". (New International, October, 1938.)

Churchill openly declares "I have not become the King's First Minister to preside over the liquidation of the British Empire!", while he proceeds to translate his words into practice by the ruthless military suppression of the Indian mass struggle for freedom. "Democratic" American Imperialism uses notorious French Fascists to set up a military dictatorship under its aegis in French North Africa. But these things affect not at all the hardened bureaucrats in the Kremlin, for the movement of the masses exists for them only as a pawn to be used in the effort to protect their own parasitic position, or as a menace to be crushed where it runs counter to their bureaucratic aims.



Chapter Nine

THE DEGENERATION OF THE SOVIET UNION

THE RETREAT

In the Soviet Union, despite Stalin's bombastic claim that Russia has attained Socialism, economic realities have forced a retreat. Russian industry was incapable of providing the machinery and equipment necessary for making collectivised agriculture an economic proposition. 90% of the peasant farms have been collectivised. But decree after decree has had to be promulgated, with the purpose of pacifying the peasants. Increasingly, concessions have had to be made to the proprietary and individualistic tendencies in the village. The land of the collective farms has been transferred to the collectives in perpetuity. The collective farmer has his own plot of land, that is, his own little farm with its own livestock, the produce of which he sells in the market. Inequalities in the village, instead of decreasing, have been growing since 1934. And this is inevitable so long as the level of agricultural technique remains low. For despite all Stalin's efforts to introduce Socialism by law, economic forces will break through those laws. As Marx pointed out in 1875, "Law can never be higher

than the economic structure and the cultural development of society conditioned by that structure".

But far more important than the differentiation taking place *within* the collectives is the differentiation taking place as *between* the collectives. A minority of collectives, thanks to superiority of soil and location, the prices paid for their products, etc., have prospered at the expense of the remainder. These Collectives have bought better equipment, increased their production still further, invested in state loans on interest, and have raised the level of well-being of their members immeasurably above that of the mass of collective farmers and industrial workers.

In the cities, the differentiation of wages among workers has proceeded apace until it has assumed gigantic proportions. The Stakhanovist worker often earns twenty to thirty times, and the higher specialist even eighty to a hundred times as much as the unskilled worker. Differences in income, based upon varying skill, intensity etc., one would expect in the Soviet Union which is still in the transitional stage between capitalism and socialism ; but not the enormous disparities that exist. It is clear that the existing differences in income result not only from differences in individual productivity, but in fact much more from the appropriation by a minority of the products of the labour of the majority. A

privileged section is living at the expense of the majority.

Who constitute this privileged section? The executive members and officials of the Soviets, officials of the party, trade unions and Communist Youth, the commanding staffs of the armed forces, the agents of the G. P. U., the dictators and vice-dictators of industrial enterprises, the whole administrative and technical personnel of industry down to the foremen, the presidents and party organisers of 250,000 collective farms and of the state farms and tractor stations, the leaders of the trade departments and co-operatives, numbering 5 to 6 million, constitute the most parasitic group in the privileged section of Soviet society. This is the bureaucracy, which is the ruling caste in the Soviet Union. This bureaucracy, together with an equal number composed of the members of the 'well-off' collectives, the Stakhanovists, and their relatives, constitute the privileged section of Soviet society. Together with their wives and families they would in all number over 20 million, i.e., 12 to 15% of the population. This is the social basis of the commanding upper circles of the bureaucracy which number probably as much as half a million.

The reaction has permeated every sphere of social life. The October revolution emancipated woman. But today abortion has been prohibited and divorces made difficult

except for the bureaucracy. Youth has suffered, as everyone else, from the reaction. The 5 million Comsomols (the Communist organisation for youths from 14 to 23 years) have been forbidden to take any part in politics. The arts and sciences have been stunted by the bureaucratic straitjacket. For, all writers must conform to every zig-zag in the party line for fear of reprisals. History has been altered and re-written over and over again to suit the requirements of the ruling faction, and of Stalin in particular. The place of literary creations of beauty is taken by panegyrics to the all-powerful leader. Artists, stage directors, and even opera singers fall into disgrace overnight at a word or even a suggestion from above. Since 1935 there has been a marked tendency to revive and re-create the heroes of Czarist times. There has been an open fostering of nationalist ideology. For, having abandoned the revolutionary traditions of October, the bankrupt bureaucracy feels the need for nationalist fetishes by which to bind the masses.

The cult of the leader has developed to such an extent that it had reached fantastic proportions. Stalin has been elevated to the position of a virtual deity. The following is an extract from a speech made at the 17th Congress of Soviets, published in 'Pravda' of February 1st, 1935, with a note of approval by Molotov. "Our love, our devotion, our strength, our heroism, our life—,

all these are thine, great Stalin! Here take them, all this is thine, chief of the great fatherland!...Men of all time and of all nations shall call by thy name all that is beautiful, strong, wise and pretty...When my beloved will bear me my child, the first word I shall teach him will be—STALIN!" (See C. L. R. James, "World Revolution"). That a speech of such a level could have been made at a Congress of Soviets is itself a measure of the extent of degeneration that has taken place in the Soviet Union.

As Trotsky says, "No army can be more democratic than the regime which nourishes it". And "The army is a copy of society and suffers from all its diseases, usually at a higher temperature". The Stalinist bureaucracy has introduced officers' ranks resplendent with bourgeois titles in the Red Army, which had all been abolished by the October revolution. An officers' hierarchy with special privileges has been created, which is now separated from the rank and file and is instead bound closer together with the ruling bureaucratic circles.

A POLITICAL COUNTER-REVOLUTION
 The Soviets, the party, and the trade unions had been the instruments through which the proletariat exercised political power and guaranteed the stability of the proletarian dictatorship. But all these have become today the instruments not of the workers but of the bureaucracy.

The Soviets had long since lost their democratic character as organisations in which the masses actively participated and intervened. But even these bureaucratised soviets have been liquidated under the New Constitution, introduced in 1937. Workers' and Soldiers' Soviets exist no longer, and the workers are dissolved in the general mass of the population. In the soviet constitution adopted after the revolution, the vote of a single worker received the same representation of five peasants, thus guaranteeing organisationally what was already guaranteed by the relation of class forces, namely, the dictatorship of the proletariat. But in the New Constitution, which declares that Socialism has been achieved and classes abolished, the worker's vote counts no more than that of a collectivised peasant. Thus the reactionary bureaucracy is relying upon the country in its struggle against the city. The New Constitution, far from being "the most democratic in the world", as Stalin boasted, is a cruel farce. It suffices to point out that there can be no democratic significance in an election in which there is but one candidate to choose from, and he too nominated by the bureaucratic apparatus.

After the revolution, the trade unions became an instrument of the workers for guaranteeing workers' democracy and protecting workers' interests. Lenin had pointed out in the famous discussion on the trade union question in 1920, that the trade unions were a necessary weapon for the defence of the workers from their own

workers' state itself, which state, moreover, was a workers' state with "bureaucratic deformations". But the Stalinist bureaucracy has taken away from the trade unions the right they enjoyed to intervene in questions of employment and dismissals of workers, and of management of the factory in general. Unlimited and uncontrolled powers have been given to the factory directors imposed from above. There has ceased to exist any kind of workers' control within the factory. Nor have the workers control over the trade union bureaucrats, who are appointed and removed from above. The party is the main instrument through which the proletariat exercises its political power in a workers' state. But for this the party itself must have a free and rich inner life. But by repeated purges, the liquidation of all opposition, in short, by the destruction of every vestige of internal democracy, the bureaucracy converted the party into its docile instrument. Since 1929 the G. P. U. has played an ever growing role in the internal life of the party. Not only expulsions, but imprisonment, exile, torture, death and punishment of relatives have become commonplace occurrences to stifle all opposition. Party Congresses, held more and more infrequently, are merely stage-managed affairs in which the policy already decided upon by the Politburo is carried unanimously with (too much) acclamation. The Politburo is always right, with one exception, that is, it cannot be right as against Stalin, who is infallible.

By strangling the Bolshevik Party, bureaucratising the trade unions and soviets, and now by even liquidating the latter, the bureaucracy has completely expropriated the workers of political power. In short, it has carried through a *political counter-revolution*.

THE TERROR AND BONAPARTISM

In order to secure its own position, the bureaucracy has found it necessary to exterminate the entire Bolshevik Old Guard and so free itself from all the encumbering traditions that still bind it to the October revolution. For example of the 19 members of the General Committee elected at the 9th Party Congress in 1920, three (including Lenin) died of natural causes. Zinoviev, Kamenev, Serebriakov, Smirnov, and now Trotsky, have been murdered. Tomsky was killed or driven to suicide. Bukharin, Krestinsky, Preobrazhensky, Rudzutak, Radek, Rakovsky and Rykov are imprisoned or disgraced as fascists or wreckers or assassins. Only Stalin, Kalinin and Andreyev remain. Ex-Mensheviks, hitherto unknown mediocrities, and even active counter-revolutionaries of the civil war period (like Maisky) have taken the places of the Bolshevik Old Guard of the revolution. The gigantic frame-ups of the Moscow Trials of 1936-37, with their charges unproved by any evidence, with the fantastic confessions of revolutionists (like Zinoviev and Kamenev) of decades of revolutionary service declaring that they had plotted to re-introduce capitalism in the

Soviet Union (1), were staged, if inefficiently, at the command of Stalin, to serve more than one purpose. Stalin did not fear individuals like Zinoviev and Kamenev, who had by their abject recantations in the past repeatedly proved their subservience to him, but he feared the traditions and ideology of the revolution, which they embodied. Secondly, by getting the accused to confess to fictitious connections with the exiled Trotsky, he was dealing a blow at the enemy he really feared, namely, the Left Opposition, driven deep underground, but representing none the less the only point around which the workers must rally in a revolt against the bureaucracy. Also, the trial, with the publicity it received throughout the country, was meant to terrorise completely not only all oppositionists, but all critics even, and this time not merely by expulsion, imprisonment or exile, but by the firing squad. Finally, by the liquidation of the whole stratum of tried revolutionists who had led the Russian revolution side by side with Lenin, Stalin no doubt hoped to further his reconciliation with the bourgeoisie of the "democratic" imperialisms with whom he was now feverishly striving to enter into a "Peace Alliance" against the Axis powers.

The terror has proceeded apace in the Soviet Union. In 1935 the death penalty was instituted for children from 12 years of age upwards. Despite the fact that mass purges had taken place before, at the end of 1935 and the first half of 1936, hundreds of thousands of party

members were again expelled, the most active of them being thrown into prisons and concentration camps. The Army has not escaped the terror. In June 1937 Marshal Tukhachevsky and 7 Generals were tried in secret without witnesses or defence and executed within forty eight hours. In 1938, 80 members of the Council of War constituted in 1934, 18 generals, and thousands of other officers and men were shot or imprisoned.

The above are only some of the more prominent instances that have seen the light of day. In the Moscow Trials, apparently only those who "confessed" were brought to trial. How many refused to "confess", how many have been shot without trial, how many imprisoned and sent to concentration camps, no one knows. Needless to add, the hysteria of bureaucratic hatred has vented itself with the most ferocity on members belonging to, or suspected of belonging to the Left Opposition.

The parasitic Soviet bureaucracy, consuming an entirely disproportionate share of the national income, incapable of utilising the active and willing co-operation of the masses, substituting its own bureaucratic mediocrity and inefficiency for mass initiative, and driven further and further along the road of guarding its own power and privileged position as against the masses, has come increasingly in contradiction with the necessities of development. It is consequently compelled on the one hand, to resort to ever more violent methods of repression against the masses whom it dreads, and on the other

hand to find scapegoats among its own number on whom to fix the blame for its own inefficiency and mistakes. The ruling Stalinist faction performs this task for the bureaucracy.

In the interests of its own self-preservation the bureaucracy has been compelled to raise the Stalinist faction even above itself, and, still further, openly to proclaim the Bonapartist principle of an infallible leader. "The increasingly insistent deification of Stalin is, with all its elements of caricature, a necessary element of the regime. The bureaucracy has need of an inviolable super-arbitrator, a first consul if not an emperor, and it raises upon its shoulders him who best responds to its claim for lordship....Each one of them at his post is thinking: L'état — c'est moi. In Stalin each one easily finds himself. But Stalin also finds in each one a small part of his own spirit. Stalin is the personification of the bureaucracy". (Trotsky, "Revolution Betrayed", page 262).

▲ DEGENERATE WORKERS' STATE

The Soviet bureaucracy has completely expropriated the workers of political power; it consumes an enormous share of the national income; it permits no control whatsoever over its actions and its income; it has become the sole commanding and privileged stratum in Soviet society. But it would be a serious error to conclude that it has become a new ruling class. A ruling economic class is based on a particular system of

property relations. The property relations established by the October revolution still remain, namely, state ownership in the decisive spheres of the economy, and the monopoly of foreign trade. "As a conscious political force the bureaucracy has betrayed the revolution. But a victorious revolution is fortunately not only a program and a banner, not only political institutions, but also a system of social relations. To betray it is not enough. You have to overthrow it. The October revolution has been betrayed by the ruling stratum, but not yet overthrown. It has a great power of resilience, coinciding with the established property relations, with the living force of the proletariat, the consciousness of its best elements, the impasse of world capitalism, and the inevitability of world revolution". (Trotsky, "Revolution Betrayed", page 238). ●

The aim of the bureaucracy is to defend its own power and privileged position. But, precisely in order to do this, it is compelled, albeit bureaucratically and inefficiently, to defend statified property as the source of its power and its income. Thus the bureaucracy plays a dual role. The progressive aspect of its work merits the support of the international proletariat, which should not, however, be blind to its reactionary general role. Thus the rule of the bureaucracy reflects in a distorted form the dictatorship of the proletariat. These considerations enable us to define the bureaucracy not as

a ruling class but as a ruling *caste*, and the Soviet Union as a degenerate workers' state.

The absolute pre-requisite of the regeneration of the workers' state is the overthrow of the corrupt and parasitic bureaucracy. But this can only be done by violence, that is to say, by a revolution. But what is called for is not a social but a political revolution. The proletariat would have to institute soviet democracy in place of the bureaucratic aristocracy. For the Soviet Union this means, among other things, a revival of freedom of Soviet parties beginning with the new Bolshevik party, a revival of the trade unions, a radical revision of economic planning in the interests of the masses, the abolition of ranks and decorations, the freedom of criticism, the release of science and art from their shackles, and last but not least, a mooring once again of Soviet foreign policy to the anchor of revolutionary internationalism.

It may pertinently be asked, why has the political revolution not yet occurred, or at least why have there been no visible signs of its approach? Trotsky answers this question. "The vast majority of the Soviet workers are even now hostile to the bureaucracy. The peasant masses hate them with their healthy plebian hate. If in contrast to the peasants the workers have almost never come out on the road of open struggle, thus condemning the protesting villages to confusion and impotence, this is not only because of the repressions.

The workers fear lest, in throwing out the bureaucracy, they will open the way for a capitalist restoration....The workers are realists. Without deceiving themselves with regard to the ruling caste—at least with regard to its lower tiers which stand near to them—they see in it the watchman for the time being of a certain part of their own conquests. They will inevitably drive out the dishonest, impudent, and unreliable watchman as soon as they see another possibility. For this it is necessary that in the West or in the East another revolutionary dawn arise". ("Revolution Betrayed", page 269).

"The first victory of a revolution in Europe would pass like an electric shock through the Soviet masses, straighten them up, raise their spirit of independence, awaken the traditions of 1905 and 1917, undermine the position of the Bonapartist bureaucracy, and acquire for the Fourth International no less significance than the October revolution possessed for the Third. Only in that way can the first workers' State be saved for the socialist future". (ibid. page 274)

The Stalinist bureaucracy knows full well that the international revolution, reviving revolutionary traditions and bringing to life and strength forces now dormant in the Soviet Union, would spell its own doom. In turning its back on international revolution the Stalinist bureaucracy was only acting in self-preservation. In no circumstances can it adopt a revolutionary policy in regard to any country, even a country with which it is at war. This

is well illustrated by the fact that even today, it does not stand for proletarian revolution in Germany, but only for the overthrow of Hitler. In an "Order of the Day" dated February 23, 1942, Stalin declared: "History teaches us that Hitlers come and go, but that the German people, the German state remains". It is no part of the plans of the Stalinist bureaucracy to overthrow the German capitalist state. Such an eventuality it would regard as a major disaster. For it fears and dreads the international revolution.

Chapter Ten

THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL THE FOUNDATION OF THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL

The historical roots of the Fourth International we have already traced to the Opposition which arose at the end of 1923 in the Communist Party of the Soviet Union under the leadership of Leon Trotsky. But the growth of the Left Opposition in the Communist Parties outside the Soviet Union had been much hampered in the years following, due to the strict censorship maintained by the bureaucratised Comintern as well as to the tissue of falsehoods and misrepresentations by which it had confused the real issues. The deportation, however, of Trotsky to Turkey in 1929, and the relative freedom he enjoyed there, enabled large numbers of Oppositionists and militant communists outside the Soviet Union to learn the truth for the first time and to benefit from the theoretical and practical guidance of Trotsky. In 1930 the International Left Opposition was established at a world conference held in Paris. When the capitulation of Stalinism to Hitler in 1933 made it clear that there was no prospect of regenerating the Comintern, the International Left Opposition boldly proclaimed the need



Nikolai Lenin

F. I. L. 4



Leon Trotsky

F. I. L. 4

of organising a new, communist, Fourth International. Increasing in strength, and joined by new parties in Germany and Holland, the International Left Opposition, renamed the International Communist League, took the initiative in calling the first international Conference for the Fourth International, which was held at Geneva in July 1936. This conference served the purpose of bringing together the international forces of the 4th International in a new organisation, equipping them ideologically, and creating an authentic international guiding centre. The conference appointed a General Council, an International Secretariat and a Bureau, and decided that a draft programme be produced, after the discussion of which arrangements should be made for the calling of a regular constituent (first) congress of the 4th International.

The 4th International movement now entered on a period in which its still small national parties and groups entered the sections of the 2nd International in various countries for the purpose of taking advantage of the leftward move taking place among the socialist workers in order to draw them into the revolutionary current of the 4th International. This policy led to an increase in strength, particularly of the sections in France, Belgium and the U. S. A. In this same period the movement shed sectarians and ultra-leftists who had joined it in the beginning. These, together with nearly all the groups of centrists have since then disappeared into oblivion. Certainly, the only revolutionary internationalist current

which has survived and expanded has been that of the 4th International.

The 4th International (World Party of the Socialist Revolution) was formally founded at a World Congress held in September 1938 in Switzerland. Shortly before the Conference the G. P. U. kidnapped and brutally murdered Rudolf Klement, secretary of the 4th International Bureau. But despite all difficulties created by the bourgeois police and the G. P. U.; the Conference met in secret and successfully concluded its labours. 30 delegates, representing organisations in the United States, France, Great Britain, Germany, the Soviet Union, Italy, Latin America, Poland, Belgium, Holland, and Greece were present. Organisations affiliated to the 4th International in Spain, Czechoslovakia, Austria, Indo-China, China, French Morocco, South Africa, Canada, several Latin American countries, Australia, New Zealand, Denmark, Norway, Lithuania, Palestine, and Roumania, were unable to send delegates because of conditions of distance, illegality and other difficulties.

The Transitional Programme adopted at the Conference was not so much the basic programme of the 4th International as its programme of action. It pointed out that the old social-democratic practice (followed by the Comintern) of dividing its programme into "maximum" and "minimum" programmes having no bridge between them, had no reality today. For, in the present era of the decline of capitalism, no serious demand of the masses

is capable of solution within the framework of capitalist property relations and of the bourgeois state. "The present epoch", it declared, "is distinguished not for the fact that it fears the revolutionary party from day to day work, but because it permits this work to be carried on indissolubly with the tasks of the revolution. The task of the transitional programme lies in the systematic mobilisation of the masses for the proletarian revolution". This programme, based on the experience of the sections of the 4th International, provided the international working class with the bridge between its demands today and the programme of proletarian revolution. Not the least significance of the Conference lay in the fact that at the most critical time, with the entire world already under the shadow of the approaching war, of all political tendencies in the workers' movement, that only organisation to convene its international congress was the 4th International.

Roughly coinciding with the holding of its conference and the adoption of the programme of transitional demands, the 4th International entered a new period, in which its sections began to evolve into parties with a mass base. This was clearly so in the case of the Socialist Workers' Party in America, and was also true of the sections of the 4th International in French Indo-China and Latin America. With the advent of the imperialist war, everywhere the inevitable repression has naturally fallen with the most severity on the intransigent

ant revolutionaries of the 4th International. But they are working everywhere, swimming against the current in some places, helping to direct the stream in others ; enjoying comparative freedom as in America, and secretly printing and publishing their organ under penalty of death as in France. The sections of the 4th International entered the war welded together by a common doctrine and armed with a revolutionary Marxist programme, confident that it is they and they alone who can lead humanity out of its impasse.

DEFENCE OF THE SOVIET UNION

The Bolshevik-Leninists have always stood for the unconditional defence of the Soviet Union. The thesis on "The Fourth International and the Soviet Union", passed at the 1916 Conference declared "The proletarian vanguard of the entire world will support the U. S. S. R. in war, in spite of the parasitic bureaucracy and of the uncrowned Negus in the Kremlin, because the social regime of the U. S. S. R., despite all its deformations and ulcers, represents an enormous historical step forward in comparison with putrified capitalism.... The defeat of the Soviet Union would not only signify the collapse of the Soviet bureaucracy but also the replacement of the state and collective property by capitalist chaos".

It is a noteworthy fact that their hostility to the Stalin regime did not prevent the German Trotskyists from informing the Soviet Government through the Soviet

Embassy in Berlin, several weeks in advance, of the intended attack on the Soviet Union, including the names of the divisions to be used—information that was no doubt taken into account in the plans of defence adopted. ("Nation", New York.)

The parties of the 4th International are the staunchest defenders of the Soviet Union, even though that defence is led by the bureaucracy. But they make it clear that even while defending the Soviet Union they do not give up the struggle against the bureaucratic apparatus. Nor can considerations of the defence of the Soviet Union ever justify the abandonment of the path of international revolution. "We must formulate our slogans in such a way that the workers see clearly just what we are defending in the U. S. S. R. (state property and planned economy), and against whom we are conducting a ruthless struggle (the parasitic bureaucracy and their Comintern). We must not lose sight for a single moment of the fact that the question of overthrowing the Soviet bureaucracy is for us subordinate to the question of preserving state property in the means of production of the U. S. S. R.; that the question of preserving state property in the means of production in the Soviet Union is subordinate for us to the question of the world proletarian revolution". (Trotsky, "The U. S. S. R. in the War", Socialist Appeal, October 10, 1939).

The Trotskyists were not taken unawares by events.

They had carefully worked out well in advance the policies which the proletariat in countries allied to the Soviet Union, as well as in countries fighting against the Soviet Union, should follow in war time. The theses of the 4th International on war, adopted by the International Secretariat as far back as May 1934, declared: "Remaining the determined and devoted defender of the workers' state in the struggle with imperialism the proletariat will not, however, become an ally of the imperialist allies of the U. S. S. R. The proletariat of a capitalist country which finds itself in alliance with the U. S. S. R. must retain fully and completely its irreconcilable hostility to the imperialist government of its own country". ("The 4th International and War").

But this does not mean that the proletariat opposes *every* action of the imperialist ally of the Soviet Union. "For instance, it would be absurd and criminal in case of war between the U. S. S. R. and Japan for the American proletariat to sabotage the sending of American munitions to the U. S. S. R." (ibid). The parties of the 4th International in countries allied to the Soviet Union give tacit support to the sending of military supplies by their own imperialist governments to the USSR, but at the same time they fight for independent working class aid to the Soviet Union, that is, for effective direct support (including military support) controlled by the proletariat.

The parties of the 4th International in countries fighting

the Soviet Union are pledged not only to struggle for the revolutionary overthrow of the bourgeoisie in their own countries, but also to resort to all actions (including sabotage) calculated to disrupt the military operations against the Soviet Union. "However during an imperialist war there may be cases where a revolutionary party will be forced to resort to military-technical means, though they do not as yet follow directly from the revolutionary movement in their *own* country. Thus, if it is a question of sending arms or troops against a workers' government or a rebellious colony, not only such methods as boycott and strike, but direct military sabotage may become entirely practical and obligatory. Resorting or not resorting to such measures will be a matter of practical possibilities". (Trotzky, "Learn to Think", New International, July 1938.)

The only real defence of the Soviet Union lies in international revolution. A victory of Anglo-American imperialism in the present imperialist war, in the absence of international revolution, cannot save the Soviet Union but will only be a prelude to the conversion of the USSR into a semi-colony of Anglo-American imperialism. Trotzky wrote as follows in 1935 :

"The situation would be radically different, of course, if the bourgeois allies received material guarantees that the Moscow Government stands on the same side with them, not only of the war trenches, but of the class trenches too. Availing themselves of the difficulties of the

Soviet Union, which will be placed between two fires; the capitalist 'friends of peace' will, of course, take all measures to drive a breach into the monopoly of foreign trade and the Soviet Laws on property. The growing 'defencist' movement among the Russian White emigres in France and Czechoslovakia 'feeds wholly upon such' calculations. If you assume that the world struggle will be played out only on a military level, the allies have a good chance of achieving their goal. Without the intervention of revolution, the social bases of the Soviet Union must be crushed; not only in the case of defeat, but also in the case of victory.

"More than two years ago a programme announcement, "The 1th International and War", outlined this perspective in the following words: 'Under the influence of the critical need of the state for articles of prime necessity, the individualistic tendencies of the peasant economy will receive a considerable reinforcement, and the centrifugal forces within the collective farms will increase with every month...In the heated atmosphere of war we may expect...the attracting of foreign allied capital, a breach in the monopoly of foreign trade, a weakening of state control of the trusts, a sharpening of competition between the trusts, conflicts between the trusts and the workers, etc...In other words, in the case of a long war, if the world proletariat is passive, the inner social contradictions of the Soviet Union not only might, but must, lead to a bourgeois Bonapartist

counterrevolution'. The events of the last two years have redoubled the force of this prognosis". ("Revolution Betrayed", page 217).

Since the attack on the Soviet Union, not a single revolutionary appeal has been addressed by the Stalinist bureaucracy to the international proletariat. In the Soviet Union itself, the bureaucracy is conducting the war not as a revolutionary war for the defence of the Conquests of October, but as a 'fatherland' war in the spirit of the patriotic traditions of old Russia. The bureaucracy is being drawn more and more into the net of Anglo-American imperialism. The Anglo-Soviet Pact binds the bureaucracy not to support revolutionary movements in the democratic imperialist countries or their colonies either now or after the war, and pledges it to support the Anglo-American imperialists in imposing a robbers' peace on the world, after victory. The Lend-Lease Agreement which it has signed, already gives the American imperialists a powerful weapon with which to break down the monopoly of foreign trade in the Soviet Union. The bureaucracy is being pushed, step by step, on the path towards becoming the agents of the Anglo-American imperialists. It is international revolution alone that can save the first workers' state.

THE IMPERIALIST WAR

The 4th International had its line in relation to the imperialist war laid down well in advance. It declared

that the war that was approaching was not a war between Democracy and Fascism, but an imperialist war fought for colonies and world domination. "A new partition of the world is on the order of the day", wrote Trotsky in an article entitled "On the Character of the Coming War" in the 'New International' of December 1938. "The first step in the revolutionary education of the workers must be to develop the ability to perceive beneath the official formulae, slogans and hypocritical phrases, the real imperialist appetites, plans, and calculations" "Imperialism is inevitably and irresistably heading to a redivision of the world, corresponding to the changed relation of forces. To prevent the catastrophe, imperialism must be strangled. All other methods are fictions, illusions, lies". "At present, after the fresh experience of Czechoslovakia, there is no necessity, it seems, to demonstrate that the imperialists are fighting one another not for political principles but for domination over the world under the cover of any principles that will serve their purpose ... To substitute political or moral abstractions for the actual aims of the warring imperialist camps is not to fight for democracy, but to help the brigands disguise their robbery, pillage and violence. This is now precisely the main function of the Second and Third Internationals."

The 4th International stands for the application of the policy of revolutionary defeatism in relation to the imperialist war. That is to say, it stands for the full

utilisation of the difficulties of the government due to the war, the intensified prosecution of the class struggle and its orientation towards the proletarian seizure of power, all in complete disregard of the adverse military consequences that result to one's own imperialist government in the prosecution of the war.

THE FUTURE

No political tendency in world history has been subjected to the persecution which the movement represented by the 4th International has suffered. Lies, calumny, imprisonment, torture, execution and assassination have been the methods used by the despotic bureaucrats in their frantic effort to destroy the irreconcilable proletarian revolutionary tendency. And it has been not only a question of the terror in the Soviet Union. In the capitalist countries of the world the Bolshevik-Leninists have been forced, in increasing measure, to meet not only the repressions of the imperialist bourgeoisie and the opposition of the Social Democrats, but also the ruthless vindictiveness of the agents of Stalin abroad. Gigantic campaigns of distortion and lies, backed by unlimited financial resources, diplomatic pressure brought to bear by the Kremlin on capitalist governments to hide the truth and to increase still further the obstacles in the path of the Bolshevik-Leninists, and even the commissioning of G. P. U. gangsters to assassinate prominent 4th Internationalists, have been among the measures adopted

by Stalin to fight the movement of the 4th International outside the boundaries of the Soviet Union.

The persecution of Leon Trotsky and his family serves to illustrate the bitter personal tragedy and heroic martyrdom suffered at the hands of the Stalinist Inquisition alone in the effort to build the 4th International. Of Trotsky's four children, Nina died of pulmonary tuberculosis in 1928, after her husband had been arrested as an oppositionist and she had consequently been deprived of all opportunity of adequate treatment; Zinaida was driven to suicide in Berlin in 1933 after she had been arbitrarily deprived of her Soviet citizenship by the Soviet Government, and had become homeless and destitute; Sergei, Trotsky's son, who had not participated in political activity of any kind, was arrested in the Soviet Union in 1935, was charged of planning the mass poisoning of workers, and has not been heard of since; Leon Sedov, Trotsky's other son, close collaborator of his father, intransigent revolutionist and fearless fighter in the cause of the 4th International, died under suspicious circumstances in Paris in 1938.

Trotsky himself, driven from Turkey to France, and France to Norway, consequent on the diplomatic pressure brought to bear by the Soviet Government on the government of these countries, was finally ordered in 1936 to leave Norway by the Norwegian Government for the same reason. Where could he go? Residence in

Germany, Italy or any Fascist country was of course impossible. Czechoslovakia and England had refused him visas, and America had shown it would do the same. There was only one government that would readily accept him, and that was the Government of the Soviet Union, in order to kill him. Stalin, who had committed the mistake of deporting him to Turkey in 1929, was now trying to get him back to the Soviet Union and remedy that error. Trotsky was finally able to find asylum in Mexico. The G. P. U. now set about in earnest to assassinate Trotsky. Several plans were made. The attempt of an armed gang to machine-gun him together with his wife and grandson in their home in Mexico in May 1939 failed due to the presence of mind of Trotsky. Three months later the Stalinist agent Jackson alias Jacques Morand succeeded in his attempt and the international proletarian movement lost its greatest living leader.

In the past under the combined blows of the imperialist police and the gangsters of Stalin, the movement of the 4th International has shown that it possesses tremendous reserve of strength. Today, despite the irreparable loss of its founder and guide, it is proving this anew. If Stalin hoped by the brutal murder of Trotsky to crush the 4th International, he has failed. For the movement of the 4th International, its roots springing from the life problems of modern society in travail, is the revolution.

ary tendency representing the historical interests of the international proletariat.

The persecution of the international Bolshevik-Leninists and the gigantic campaign of falsehood levelled against them by the Stalintern is no doubt one of the causes for the comparatively slow growth of the 4th International movement in the past. It is not an easy task for a revolutionary group, weak in numbers, and still weaker in financial means, to compete successfully against a vast organisation backed by the resources of an entire state, particularly when that organisation is exploiting the revolutionary traditions of the October revolution. But much more important than all this has been the general decay of the workers' movement in the past fifteen years, deepened in turn by each fresh betrayal of the Comintern.

The revolutionary party gains strength and grows in a period of rise, and it shrinks, sometimes to a mere handful, in a period of defeats and decline. The Bolsheviks in Russia rose to a commanding position in 1905, but in the period of reaction from 1908 to 1913 they were reduced to scattered groups. In the first period of the war of 1914-18, when a wave of patriotism carried everything before it, they were reduced to the illegal existence of a hunted sect. But this did not prevent them from leading the victorious revolution in October 1917. And the obstacles in the path of the international Bolshevik-Leninists have been much greater. It is true,

their analyses and predictions have been borne out by events over and over again. Nevertheless the disastrous defeats to which the Stalintern has led the workers, and the resulting disillusionment and apathy of the masses have adversely affected, not least of all, the revolutionary movement of international Bolshevism. The Bolshevik-Leninists have been forced to wait patiently for a turn in the tide.

As Trotsky says, "I remember some discussion in 1923 in Moscow after Chiang Kai Shek killed the Chinese workers. We predicted this ten days before and Stalin opposed us with the argument that Borodin was vigilant, that Chiang Kai Shek would not have the possibility to betray us, etc. I believe that it was eight or ten days later that the tragedy occurred and our comrades expressed optimism because our analysis was so clear that everyone would see it and we would be sure to win the party." I answered that the strangulation of the Chinese revolution is a thousand times more important for the masses than our predictions. Our predictions can win some few intellectuals who take an interest in such things, but not the masses. The military victory of Chiang Kai Shek will inevitably provoke a depression and this is not conducive to the growth of a revolutionary fraction". ("Fighting against the Stream", Fourth International, May 1941). And again, "Dilettantes, charlatans, or blockheads incapable of probing into the dialectic of historic ebbs and

flows have more than once brought in their verdict: "The ideas of the Bolshevik-Leninist may perhaps be correct but they are incapable of building a mass organisation." As if a mass organisation can be built under any and all conditions! As if a revolutionary program does not render it obligatory for us to remain in the minority and swim against the stream in an epoch of reaction! That revolutionist is worthless who uses his own impatience as a measuring rod for the tempo of an epoch. Never before has the path of the world revolutionary movement been blocked with such monstrous obstacles as it is today on the eve of a new epoch of greatest revolutionary convulsions." (A "Great Achievement", New International, October 1938).

The First Imperialist World War resulted in one victorious proletarian revolution and revolutionary convulsions elsewhere that shook capitalism to its foundations. Today World Imperialism is more decrepit, and mankind richer in experience, by 25 years. The present imperialist war, which has drawn the entire world even more completely into its mealstorm, heralds the approach of even greater revolutionary convulsions than the last. Either during the course of the war, or failing that, at the end of it, World Imperialism will be faced with the greatest crisis in its history. The masses, driven to desperation in their millions by war and the conditions it has produced, will see in revolution the only way out.

They will find no other leadership than that offered them by the international Bolshevik-Leninists. The coming World Revolution will unfold under the banner of the Fourth International.



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